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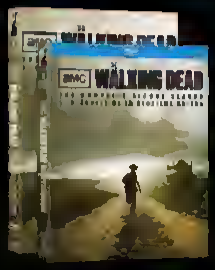
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RUE MORGUE
AUGUST 2012 125



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Filmmaker Tim Sullivan visited the author's home last year and sat down with him for a final interview. In this *Rue Morgue* exclusive, we get a very intimate look at the late literary legend **PLUS!** A roundup of some of Bradbury's best contributions to EC Comics in the 1950s, and the most impressive TV, movie and vintage audio adaptations of his work.
by **TIM SULLIVAN, PAUL CORUPE, JASON PICHONSKY** and **A.S. BERMAN**

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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

One of Ray Bradbury's most famous quotes reads, "I don't try to describe the future. I try to prevent it." I take away a nice double meaning to those words. There's the more obvious one within the context of genre, in which the author is using fantasy (or in the case of *Fahrenheit 451*, science fiction – he was specific about the terms) to show us what might wait at the end of the dangerous road we're travelling, as he did with *The Martian Chronicles*. Published in 1950, as the Cold War was ramping up, the short story collection concerns humans attempting to colonize Mars after ruining Earth via a nuclear holocaust, and the conflict between them and the Martians whose planet they invade. When he says "I try to prevent it" – that's exactly what made his fiction so relevant.

To me, those words also describe *why* he did what he did and, by extension, why so many of us love worlds filled with strange creatures, frightening technologies, surreal landscapes and all manner of things that can fascinate and terrify in equal measure. When he says he's trying to prevent the future, he also means never growing up. That childlike wonder and eternal nostalgia for the innocence of youth comes through in both his work and our interview with him. Even in his nineties, the author proclaimed "I'm not old enough," at the notion of truncating his creative output.

Stephen King once talked about him as one of those great fantasy writers who "retains very strongly the look of a boy." Considering Bradbury and his two pals Forrest J Ackerman and Ray Harryhausen all immersed themselves in a life of monsters and fantasy, and all celebrated 90th birthdays, there's certainly an argument to be made that the Fountain of Youth has myriad weird, wonderful things swimming around in it. Bradbury swam with them as long as he could, fiercely defying his own mortality with the fantastic. While recovering from a stroke in his late seventies, he penned two novels and a short story (according to a 2000 *Peoria Journal Star* interview). When he couldn't walk anymore, he'd attend San Diego Comic Con in a wheelchair. I saw him on the crowded vendor floor there several years ago, meeting fans and visiting with Ackerman, while grinning and gesturing like they were kids with a secret. And when his eyesight failed him, he continued to dictate stones to his daughter. His physical deterioration only seemed to invigorate his mind, at least if his late-game literary output is any indication.


Darren Zenko

But not every fantasist gets so many decades to tell his tales.

This week, a friend of mine named Darren Zenko succumbed to a cancer that took – in various measures – his hearing, sight, sense of taste, even his ability to produce saliva, before ending his life at age 38. He was one of the best writers I knew, aside from film reviews, video game columns, opinion pieces and all sorts of other journalism, he penned books about ghost animals and shapeshifters, as well as one called *Field Guide to Monsters*.

People say you "battle" cancer, but when it's terminal, it's more like a gradual retreat – the outcome is already decided. But that doesn't mean there weren't other battles Darren could win. One of his close friends told me that his love of the fantastic was a great defense against the increasing pain that he suffered. After Darren learned that he was going to die, he didn't retreat into self-pity but instead – among other things – set to work on writing an epic fantasy comic that he'd been contemplating for years.

Called *Delving*, it features a group of heroes (including a magician, shape-shifter and a mutant with purple skin, talons and huge orange eyes) on a quest in a land that's both scarred by industrial mining (undoubtedly a metaphor for his home province of Alberta, where the tar sands are causing massive pollution) and filled with mystical items and dangerous creatures. The scripts for the first two issues feature catacombs filled with the undead, a fight between a towering cyclops and a giant stone statue, a centipede with two human faces and even a zombie griffon that explodes when exposed to the sun. This is as fun as it gets. (A bunch of Darren's friends are working on getting the story published, so hopefully you'll get a chance to experience his expansive imagination too.) *Delving* is a reminder that even when the body is weak, heroes and their monsters remain strong in the mind of those given to dreaming them up. The world was spoiled by the extent of Ray's output, and left wanting by that of Darren, and both of them exemplify the virtues of never really growing up.

If you're a storyteller, this is your invitation to create, sooner rather than later, if you're a reader of genre fiction, this is your reminder to make time to play in that world. As Ray once advised, "Stuff your eyes with wonder, live as if you'd drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It's more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories."

If there's some kind of an afterlife, I hope it can match the imaginations of boys like Ray and Darren.

Dave Alex

dave@rue-morgue.com

Horror in Culture & Entertainment
RUE MORGUE
MARRS MEDIA INC. RUE-MORGUE.COM
2926 DUNDAS STREET WEST TORONTO, ONTARIO M6P 1Y6 CANADA
PH 416.651.9675 FAX 416.651.6085 EMAIL INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM
FB FACEBOOK.COM/RUEMORGUEMAGAZINE TWITTER TWITTER.COM/RUEMORGUE

STAFF

PUBLISHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MANAGING EDITOR
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
ART DIRECTOR
COPY EDITOR
OFFICE MANAGER
ONLINE EDITOR
MARKETING/ADVERTISING MANAGER
PH 905 885-0430
FX 905 885-4185
E jody@rue-morgue.com
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER
INTERNS
SCOTT CROMPTON
DAVID KRAUSE

RUE MORGUE INTERNATIONAL
facebook.com/RueMorgueFrance
facebook.com/RueMorgueUK
facebook.com/RueMorgueGermany
k.com/RueMorgueMexico

CONTRIBUTORS

MIKE BEARDSALL
A.S. BERMAN
LYLE BLACKBURN
JOHN W. BOWEN
PHIL BROWN
JAMES BURRELL
PEDRO CABEZUELO
PAUL CORUPE
PATRICK DOLAN
RYAN DYER
JAY FOSGITT
THE GORE-MET
MARK R. HASAN
LAST CHANCE LANCE
MOANER T. LAWRENCE
AARON VON LUPTON
SHAWN MACOMBER
DEJAN OGNJANDVIĆ
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JASON PICHONSKY
SEAN PLUMMER
GARY PULLIN
JESSA SOBCZUK
TIM SULLIVAN
JUSTINE WARWICK
KEVIN J. WETMORE, JR.
TAL ZIMERMAN

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RUE MORGUE #125 is dedicated to Ernest Borgnine, Richard D. Zanuck and Darren Zenko, R.I.P., and Lyta Blackburn – someday you'll be hunting Bigfoot with your dad, kiddo!

COVER RAY BRADBURY
Design by Justin Erickson

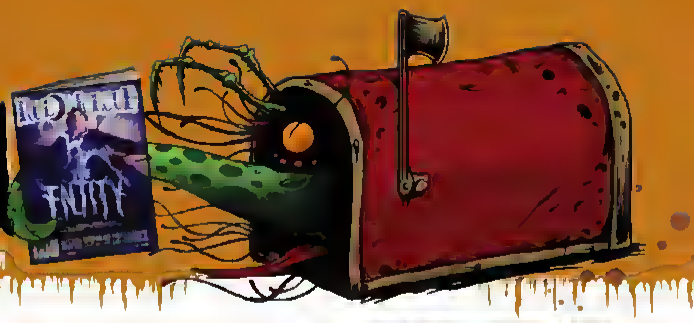
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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



I'VE BEEN A SUBSCRIBER and reader since 2005 and I have to say, what's up with Dave Alexander trying his best to constantly discount any type of 'spirituality?' His Note From Underground on *The Entity* (*RM#124*) was unreal. He turns it into some typical modern indie diatribe on rape and feels the need to not mention any of the "veracity of that claim" about the real woman that story is based on. All of his Notes are like this. Isn't horror the genre that deals with concepts of good and evil, our mortality, and the supernatural? I love how Dave always gets his little bites in by contrasting the supernatural with "real life." I even notice your very intentional ways of never capitalizing "God" but instead capitalizing "Devil." Weird and rather "modern dumb" if you ask me. You guys are angry. I get that vibe from reading your magazine. When my subscription runs out, I might be done with *Rue Morgue*.

CHERYL STRATTON – CONSHOHOCKEN, PENNSYLVANIA

[We do capitalize both God and the Devil when speaking of the actual entities, though not when speaking of gods and devils more generically – Ed.]

WAS SO PSYCHED when I saw *The Entity* on the cover of @RueMorgue. That movie scared me to death when I was young.

@SCARINASVAULT, VIA TWITTER

GOT *RM#124* in the mail today and it looks just awesome again. Glad it doesn't look like a crime against humanity like *RM#123*. My eyes were vomiting when I looked at it.

USTUMALLAGAM EXMORTIS, VIA FACEBOOK

AS A PARANORMAL INVESTIGATOR, *The Entity* inspired me to investigate all things paranormal. When I worked my first demonic case, I expected it to be like *The Entity*, but guess what? It was worse. I hope there is a remake of *The Entity*. I would like to see how another director/producer will redo this awesome suspense thriller!

PAUL OALE ROBERTS – ELK GROVE, CALIFORNIA

@RUEMORGUE, any plans to cover the impending Cabal Cut of *Nightbreed*?

@_BARBELITH, VIA TWITTER

[We screened Nightbreed: The Cabal Cut for our CineMacabre Movie Night last month. Keep an eye on future issues of Rue Morgue for coverage of the film. – Ed.]

I GREATLY ENJOYED reading your top 25 missing horror films list in *RM#124* – some films I've never even heard of! However, one missing horror film that was conspicuously absent was *The Terror* (1928). What makes its absence so glaring is that it is considered by many to be the first horror film to feature talking, using the Vitaphone sound-on-disc system. The plotline concerns a masked killer and a creepy isolated Inn not unlike most horror films of the day, such as *The Gorilla* or *The Cat Creeps*. Maybe you can research the film further and devote a full article to history's first full-sound horror film! Keep up the good work.

JOHN CORRELL – SPOTSWOOD, NEW JERSEY

GUESS WHAT *Rue Morgue*? We hit our Indiegogo goal of $20k so we're going to print! And you had a hand in it! Thanks for the awesome article in July's issue. We can't wait to get [the *Nowadays* graphic novel] out in the world!

CHRISTOPHER MERKLEY, VIA FACEBOOK

I LOVED YOUR COVER story about *The Loved Ones* (*RM#123*). It's been a while since I've seen a character so deliciously psychotic as lovely Lola.

JESSICA YBARRA – EL PASO, TEXAS

IN *RM#123*, they mention the ad campaign for grind-gore band Cattle Decapitation, whose new album *Monolith of Inhumanity* has *Garbage Pail Kids*-style art from the GPK artist. They freakin' rule!

GIOVANNI OELOIO, VIA FACEBOOK

THANKS @RUEMORGUE for the sweet Oren Peli-signed *Chernobyl Diaries* poster. It's going to look great framed on my wall!

@SONICIAN, VIA TWITTER

REALLY LOVED SEEING the June CineMacabre screening of *The Gate* at the Toronto Underground Cinema. First time, after only ever having it described to me by my mum. Drywall zombies, dead dogs and Barbie doll eye-stabbing would have been waaay too intense for me as a kid. If guest Ingrid Veninger suggests a spell of levitation, you'd better hold tight. ;) Thanks *Rue Morgue*.

JONATHAN BUNNING, VIA FACEBOOK

LET ME START by saying how impressed I am with the magazine. I have loved horror movies and books since I can remember. Unfortunately, I just started reading the mag in September 2011 but have been getting the back issues ever since. Just wondering, do you or will you have an issue that focuses on *Friday the 13th*?

TRACI WOOD – ADDRESS WITHHELD

[The January/February 2001 issue, RM#19, features a cover story on Jason X and includes a special series overview – Ed.]

@RUEMORGUE SERIOUSLY has the best customer service for their subscriptions. Thank you for being outstanding!

@MIOMOVIEMAMA79, VIA TWITTER

CORRECTION: *In RM#124, we incorrectly identified the director of* The Incredible Shrinking Man. *The film was made by Jack Arnold. We regret the error.*

WOULD YOU RATHER? WEDNESDAYS

WEEKLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE





WOULD YOU RATHER go skinny dipping with the quiet new girl at Sleepaway Camp, or take young Jason Voorhees out canoeing at Camp Crystal Lake?

New girl. I might get some from her.

JOSHTOPUS REX QUIET

Quiet new girl who also has a penis. Yes, a penis.

SAMUEL ROBERT SCHROEDER

Bahaha ha! I would pick Jason. I mean, he's all waterlogged and not much of a threat, yet.

BRANDON BLAKE

I'd HANG with the quiet girl. Ha!

LEWIS TICE

I'll take the canoe trip. At least I'd have the advantage of whacking Jason upside the head with an oar if he got out of line.

GREGORY G. KURCZYNSKI

Looks like someone already beat you to the punch there, Gregory.

GREG BROWN

I think both would make playing Marco Polo not so fun.

FELICIA FURY

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM OR

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Dreadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS — HORROR HAPPENINGS

EXORCIST PLAY UPDATES ORIGINAL NOVEL WITH MODERN EVILS

At a time when we have *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, *Shrek The Musical* and even *Evil Dead The Musical*, it was perhaps inevitable that *The Exorcist* would show up on stage. The live theatre version, which plays through August 12 at Los Angeles' Geffen Playhouse, is neither a musical nor a take on the movie, however, but rather an adaptation of William Peter Blatty's 1971 novel of the same name.

John Pielmeier – whose play and film *Agnes of God* concerns a nun who strangles her newborn upon claiming she was impregnated by God – penned the stage version of the story, after approaching Blatty personally for permission to adapt the tale.

"To be honest, the play just came spilling out of me," he recalls. "It was actually not much of a challenge to write once I started, but it took time to finally sit down and start. I have never written anything as quickly. I finished the first draft in ten days. Excuse the pun, but *The Exorcist* just vomited out of me."



Emily Yetter (Regan MacNeil) and Harry Groener (Burke Dennings) star in the world premiere of John Pielmeier's ***The Exorcist*** *at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles*

Much of his take – directed by John Doyle, who won a Tony for his version of *Sweeney Todd* – consists of the conversations between the demon and Father Karras. When Father Merrin arrives, the men try to drive the evil entity out of young Regan MacNeil. Brooke Shields plays Chris MacNeil, the mother of the possessed girl. Richard Chamberlain plays Father Merrin, and genre fans may recognize Harry Groener (TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) as film director Burke Dennings. Detective Kinderman, played by Lee Cobb in the original movie and George C. Scott in *Exorcist III*, is notably missing.



"Kinderman functions as a detective, and there is no mystery, so you don't need anyone to investigate," notes Pielmeier. "We know who killed Burke Dennings."

Also missing are many, but not all, of the demonic effects. Pielmeier says the play "needs no spinning heads or green vomit," as the film succeeds 'in spite of the special effects." He argues that the questions the play raises constitute the real horror.

"How real is the Devil? How does he affect our lives if he is real? There's a little element of fear that never allows us to be certain about anything. I think that's what people were really reacting to in the movie theatre – not the spinning heads, but the possibility that all this just might be true. The feeling that we may be helpless in the face of such power."

Not only did Pielmeier place less emphasis on theatrics, he also modernized the story, making references to the Catholic Church's pedophilia scandal, Somalia and 9/11. Father Merrin even states, "The Devil is a terrorist."

"It's about the fear of terrorism and the power of terrorism," confirms Pielmeier. "The Devil is a terrorist. You beat terrorists by not allowing yourself to be frightened. If you give in to fear, then the terrorist will have achieved his objective – he has terrorized you. So we must learn not to give in to fear."

The biggest challenge faced by the production, though, is a more practical one – namely how to bring a feeling of genuine supernatural dread to a theatre where the exorcism is performed before the audience. Helping in that department is Teller, of magicians Penn and Teller, who is on board as a creative consultant. Pielmeier cites Teller's Grand Guignol-like *Play Dead* (the 2010 off-Broadway illusion-based production about contacting the dead) as one of the scariest things he'd seen in a theatre, and hopes to employ similar magic-based special effects during the exorcism itself.

"We're hoping that people will be frightened," says Pielmeier. "It's a story that is so familiar that there are not a lot of surprises in it in one sense. If horror depends on surprise, there is not a lot in our favour. But people also come to the play with expectations, so they might also be sitting on the edge of their seat from the beginning, because they know what they are going to get. That's in our favour."

KEVIN J. WETMORE, JR



SLIPKNOT LAUNCHES APOCALYPSE-THEMED MUSIC FEST

The culture of Slipknot is spreading. On August 17 and 18, the Grammy-winning metal collective is set to stage two day-long events called Knotfest, one in the band's home state of Iowa and another in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Joined by other ear-crushing acts such as Lamb of God, Dethklok, Cannibal Corpse and Deftones, Slipknot's inaugural branded event will cap a string of sporadic tour dates that the group has embarked upon – including its current headlining slot on the 26-date Rockstar Mayhem Festival – since bassist Paul Gray fatally overdosed in May 2010.

According to percussionist Shawn "Clown" Crahan, the atmosphere of Knotfest – which will also be a global pay-per-view event – will be more in line with the immersive tone of European festivals, and will be wrapped in a "pagan, ritualistic and apocalyptic" motif, with fire-breathers, stilt-walkers, amusement park rides, masked performers, interactive graffiti walls, a Slipknot museum, and a drum circle built out of junkyard cars.

"Anytime you hand us the wand, man, we're gonna turn you into a frog," he says. "Instead of feeling catered to, you're going to feel more like the bomb's gone off and our culture's all together and we're hanging on, ready to take on anything that might want to come take us out. It's a very fearful environment, very unsafe and it feels almost claustrophobic. And yet you feel completely comfortable because you know it's exactly where you're supposed to be."



***Slipknot** prepares a double shot of its day-long "dark carnival" Knotfest later this month.*

After a lengthy grieving process following Gray's death, Slipknot announced in early 2011 that original guitarist Donnie Steele, who played on 1996's *Mate. Feed. Kill. Repeat.* demo, had rejoined the band as its new bassist. Just don't expect to see him at Knotfest. While those in attendance will hear Steele playing, the eight remaining members of Slipknot – who also go by numerical aliases numbered one through nine (Gray was number two) – have yet to allow the bassist to appear onstage with them, preferring that he perform his parts from behind a curtain.



"There's only nine," Crahan states plainly. "If we make another record – which we want to, but I'm not a fortune teller – we'll decide if that person is going to play on the record and then whether that person's gonna play on stage."

For previous live shows, the band has instead opted to symbolically display Gray's mask, jumpsuit and bass guitar behind them – a sentiment Crahan says will be taken to the next level at Knotfest.

"We have a huge banner in the back with a giant number two on it and nothing else," he reveals. "There's no way of making him more larger than life than having something that takes up the whole back of the stage with his number on it.

He will be there in spirit."

If Crahan's aforementioned uncertainty about a follow-up to the band's 2008 platinum-selling fourth studio album, *All Hope Is Gone*, sounds rather ominous, consider that a recent press release also declares Slipknot's summer concerts to be "the end of the beginning" for the band, and that Knotfest will be "the last chance to see them as they are now." Then there was last month's release of *Antennas to Hell* (Roadrunner Records), a greatest hits collection commemorating the band's first fifteen years. An inauspicious swan song or just the end of a difficult chapter for one of hard rock's biggest names? Asked the question directly, Crahan seemingly backpedals.

"Take some time off, finish all the right thought processes that we need to, get together, write a record, record a record, pre-produce a tour, go out on tour, drop a record. That's the plan," explains the percussionist, who has also been signing copies of his new art and photography book, *The Apocalyptic Nightmare Journey*, at every tour stop.

It would seem that Slipknot's future is as complex as the rich mythology the costumed band has carefully constructed throughout its career.

"We're not a band, we're a culture," corrects Crahan. "[Slipknot and its fans] are one in the same. We're a kingdom. And you don't fuck around with this kingdom."

TREVOR TUMINSKI



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FIRST AND FINAL MAN-THING COMICS TO BE RELEASED TOGETHER THIS HALLOWEEN



What's green and corrosive and feels your pain? It's Marvel's Man-Thing, the empathic swamp creature that returned last month in a three-issue comic book miniseries, penned by a writer four years deceased. More than twenty years in the making, *The Infernal Man-Thing* is set to be bundled with the 1974 story that inspired it in a new trade paperback release scheduled for October 31.

Created by Stan Lee, Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway, Man-Thing first appeared in the May 1971 issue of Marvel's *Savage Tales*, and amassed its biggest following in 1974 and 1975 during an eponymous 22-issue run scripted by the late Steve Gerber, who succumbed to pulmonary fibrosis in 2008.

According to artist Kevin Nowlan – whose sketched layouts served as the basis for the final Man-Thing story – Gerber finished the script for "Screenplay of the Living Dead Man" back in 1991, intending it to be a 62-page graphic novel sequel to his own "Song-Cry of the Living Dead Man" (1974's *Man-Thing #12*).

"I loved the original comics that I read as a teenager in the '70s, especially when Gerber and [artist Mike] Ploog were working together," says Nowlan. "Those stories were introspective and human, with the monster serving more as a conduit or a facilitator than a protagonist. It was a pretty radical concept at the time – a comic about a mindless monster that not only can't think but can barely act or react."

Nowlan notes that, before Ploog, Man-Thing too closely resembled Golden Age comic book character The Heap, and that it was Ploog's re-imagining of the character's aesthetic that inspired his own interpretation.

"Ploog made him look more solid and less like a pile of compost," he explains. "He also gave the monster a little pathos with his stooped posture and body language. He made his neck longer and gave him weight. He used exaggeration to make the monster look more 'real.' That was my starting point."

The end point, of course, will be headed to fans' bookshelves later this year, sating decades of curiosity.

A.S. BERMAN

ENTRAILS

❯ After twenty years, the rock band comprised of Stephen King and his contemporaries called it quits in June. The Rock Bottom Remainders disbanded in part because of the death of lead singer Kathi Kamen Goldmark from breast cancer this past May. Goldmark was the book publicist who convinced King, Dave Barry, Amy Tan, Scott Turow, Mitch Albom, Ridley Pearson, James McBride, Roy Blount Jr., Greg Iles and *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening to play together in various configurations over the years. The group raised more than $2 million for charity during that time.

❯ Character actor Richard Lynch, who appeared in horror flicks such as *Rob Zombie's Halloween* and *Bad Dreams* (1988), died June 19 at the age of 76, after suffering a heart attack. Boasting a scarred face he once attributed to an LSD-fuelled experiment with fire, Lynch's final role is as Rev. John Hawthorne in Zombie's forthcoming *The Lords of Salem*. "Richard was great to work with and really gave it his all," Zombie wrote on his site. "I will never forget the way he scared the crap out of the kid actors in *Halloween*."



❯ *Exorcist* author William Peter Blatty announced plans to sue Georgetown University, his Washington, D.C., alma mater (also basically the book's setting), in church court. He charges that the Catholic university has strayed so far from the edicts of the Holy See that it should no longer be allowed to call itself Catholic. Having recently launched The Father King Society in order to rally supporters, he cited the university's refusal to adhere to canonical law and flouting Catholic morality by inviting pro-choice supporters to speak at the school.

❯ In July, Lamb of God frontman Randy Blythe (pictured) was arrested by Czech police upon entering the country for allegedly killing a fan he shoved off stage at a May 2010 show in Prague. Prosecutors allege that Blythe pushed a nineteen-year-old fan, who, after repeatedly trying to climb onto the stage, hit his head on the venue's concrete floor and died from his injuries two weeks later. Blythe posted nearly $200,000 bail and was still awaiting release from custody in the Czech Republic at press time. If found guilty, he faces up to ten years in prison.

❯ In what must surely be a record, Florida death metal band Amon released its first album, *Liar In Wait*, in May – 25 years after forming. The nucleus of the group, guitarists Brian and Eric Hoffman, originally started Amon in 1987 with vocalist Glen Benton and drummer Steve Asheim. Two years later, the band changed its name to Deicide and became internal pillars of the death metal scene. After years of bickering with Benton, the Hoffmans left Deicide in 2004 and resurrected the Amon name last year with bassist/singer Jechael and drummer Mike Petrak.

❯ Last month, cable network A&E ordered ten episodes of a TV series prequel to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* that will explore the early life of Norman Bates and his relationship with "Mother." Developed by the executive producers of *Lost* and *Friday Night Lights*, *Bates Motel* promises to shed some light on how "Norma" – as she's been rechristened here – raised a serial killer for a son. The show is reportedly set to premiere in 2013.

A.S. BERMAN

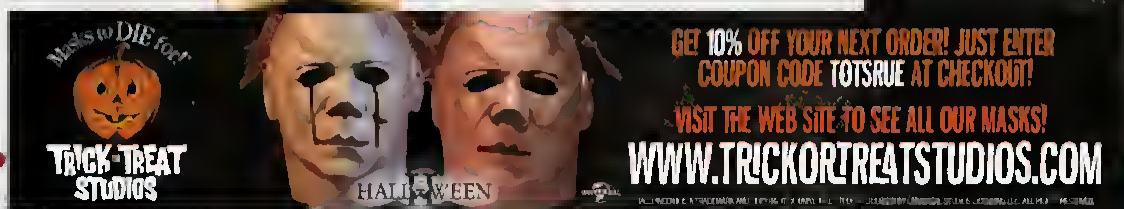
MONSTRO BIZARRO

According to the *U.K. Daily News*, politicians in India recently offered a reward of 100,000 rupees (nearly $2000) for the capture of vampires suspected of sucking the blood of cattle near the town of Dharampuri in Tamil Nadu. As a result of the strange, night-time incidents, locals painted holy signs and messages on their doors, begging the monsters, known locally as Ratha Kaatteri, to spare their lives. Authorities claim the rumours are being "spread by criminals who do not want people disturbing their late-night deliveries of bootleg booze."

Popular Animal Planet show *Finding Bigfoot* kicked off its third season in July. According to the cable channel, the show has become one of its top three performing series of all time, with an average of 1.3 million viewers per episode. The third season will expand the search zone to more US states, in addition to international expeditions to Australia and Sumatra, where tales of man-like apes also exist.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO 125

A 22-year-old Texas man was arrested this past June on animal cruelty charges after he allegedly got high on synthetic cannabis and proceeded to kill and eat the family dog

The role of Dr Loomis in John Carpenter's *Halloween* was originally offered to Christopher Lee

Postal service to some 30 residences in Winnipeg, Manitoba, was halted recently after a spate of attacks on a postal worker by a murder of crows

The courtroom dialogue and hijinks featured in *Cannibal! The Musical* are based on actual trial transcriptions from the prosecution of real-life cannibal Alfred Packer, on whom the film is based

According to a recent article in the *Toronto Star*, more than 200 people have vanished without a trace from cruise ships over the past ten years

Krishna Shah's *Hard Rock Zombies* was originally conceived as a movie-within-a-movie for his feature *American Drive-In*. However, after being written, it was considered good enough to be its own film.

Earlier this summer, a 73-year-old Vermont man bled out on the kitchen floor of a home he attempted to rob after smashing through a window and slicing himself open on the broken glass

Georges Melies' *La manoir du Diable* (*The Manor of the Devil*) is largely credited as the world's first horror film. It's a two-minute short from 1896 about a large bat that transforms into Mephistopheles

An Oregon man in his 50s was hospitalized with the plague (a.k.a., Black Death) after being bitten by his pet cat this past June. According to the World Health Organization, there are 1000 to 3000 confirmed cases of the flea-borne bacterial disease each year

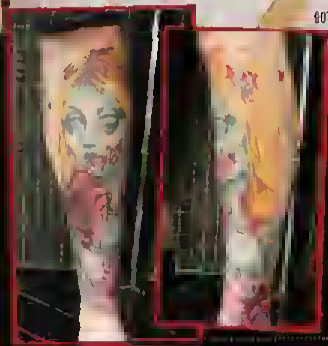
Between 1948 and 1956, Ray Bradbury published seven short stories in the long-running Canadian magazine *Maclean's*, one of which was a chapter of *The Martian Chronicles*.

A father in Jaipur, India, recently beheaded his twenty-year-old daughter for her perceived dalliances with men. After committing the murder, he paraded her head through his community before turning himself in to police.

Betty Buckley, who played Miss Collins in *Carrie* (1976), went on to play Carrie's mother in the tallied Broadway musical adaptation of the film. A version of the song 'When There's No One' which was written for that particular production, appears on her 1994 album *Children Will Listen*

A Florida teacher was arrested in June after allegedly persuading two former students to take part in a ritual that involved cutting themselves open in order to release the "evil spirits" trapped within them

COMPILED BY MONICA S. KUEBLER AND PATRICK DOLAN
GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO INFO@RUEMORGUE.COM



BODY HORROR

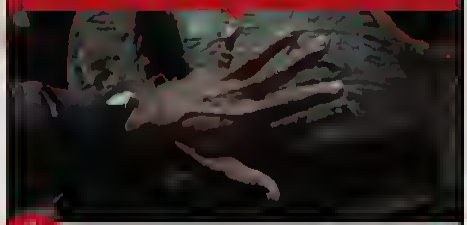
ZOMBIE GIRL
ARTIST: Erin Chance (erinchancetattoo.com)

"I'd already done three fairly large tattoos on this guy, two of which consisted of girls and flowers! He was getting playfully teased by his workmates about when he was gonna get a guy's tattoo. He emailed me saying, "I want a zombie... make it gory," and this is the result. – **Erin Chance**

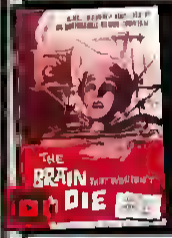
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5. 5. THE DEVIL'S RAIN
SHATNER BATTLES BORGNINE FOR BEELZEBUB'S BIBLE
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2 ZOMBIE BATH SALTS

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Summer can be tough on a rotter: decay is enough to contend with on a good day, but soaring temperatures can really ripen your already rancid flesh. No more! Jump into a nice cool tub full of Zombie Bath Salts, forget about moaning about brains, and launch into a hearty rendition of Alice Cooper's "I'll Bite Your Face Off," while you're busy with the loofah. Salt your wounds at **bathfromthedead.com**.

3 CTHULHU TIKI MUG

$40

Initiated as a Kickstarter project, this stunning green Cthulhu mug, crafted in clay, holds a mighty 36 ounces. Take it to your local tiki bar and you'll be chanting "Ph'nglui mglw nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn" in no time – especially if you're drunk. Toast inter-dimensional terror at **kickstarter.com** (search "the horror in clay").

4 FRANKENSTEIN TISSUES

$1.95

Head colds are monstrous at any time of year, especially in summer, and allergies can turn anyone into a snot-filled outrage to God and nature. A handy packet of tissues bearing the iconic image of Karloff's monster will keep your frightful snuffling under control. Love dead, hate boogers at **neatoshop.com**.



2



3



4

All photos USD unless otherwise indicated

CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

THE GAME OF JAWS

(Ideal Toy Corp., 1975)

Jaws spawned a cornucopia of merchandise after its release in 1975 – everything from beach towels to shark-shaped necklaces. One of the most popular items produced was Ideal Toy's *The Game of Jaws*. Designed for two to four players, the aim of the game is to fish out assorted items (including a skull, boat steering wheel, gun, walkie-talkie, camera and lantern) from the shark's toothy maw before it snaps shut. Recognizable by its fantastic box art, featuring slightly modified movie poster graphics (the female swimmer was removed), it can easily be found on eBay for $15 to $30.

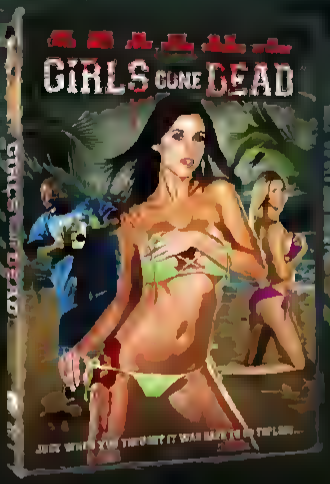
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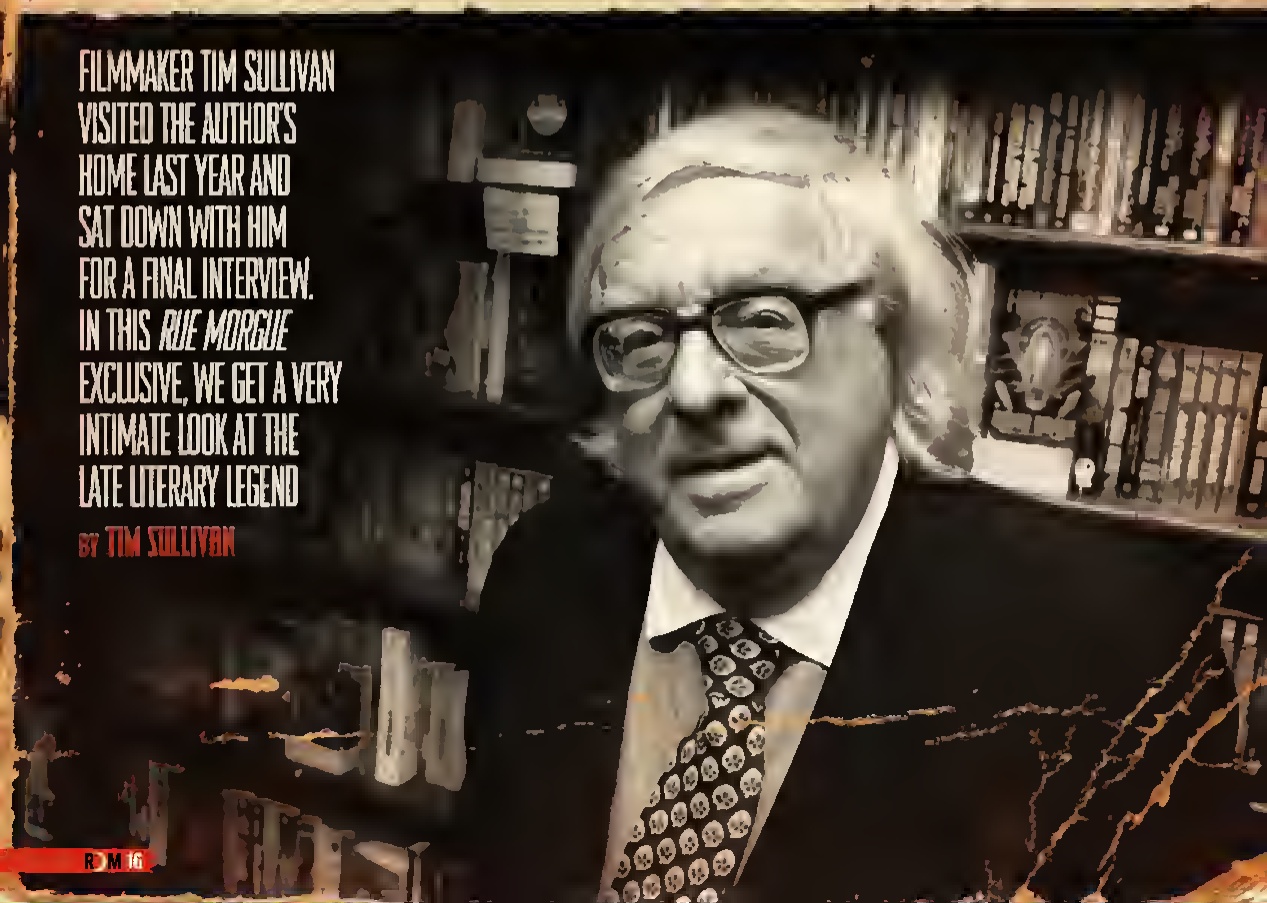
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THE LIFE, LOVES AND STRANGE STORIES OF RAY BRADBURY

FILMMAKER TIM SULLIVAN VISITED THE AUTHOR'S HOME LAST YEAR AND SAT DOWN WITH HIM FOR A FINAL INTERVIEW. IN THIS *RUE MORGUE* EXCLUSIVE, WE GET A VERY INTIMATE LOOK AT THE LATE LITERARY LEGEND

BY TIM SULLIVAN



There once was a world that claimed as its boundaries the contours of a certain human mind. Martians lived there, as did dinosaurs and robots and illustrated men. Carnivals and magic shows were constant affairs, the local movie theatre never went digital, *King Kong* battled with airplanes over Fay Wray nightly, and the darkest prediction was not that books might be burned, but that they might never be read. Creativity, both in absorption and expulsion, was as essential to existence as breathing and dreaming...



For 91 years, Ray Bradbury's world flourished. Entertaining. Enlightening. A poetic reminder that, though in shadows something wicked might very well this way come, the love of life will forever transcend death. On June 5 of this year, he retired to the twilight to forever drink the dandelion wine of youth, nostalgia and sentiment, emboldened by the lessons of yesterday and the promise of tomorrow, in glorious service to a forever today.

On several occasions, I was blessed to pay intimate visits to Ray's world. We shared a common friend in Forry J Ackerman, whose work, like Ray's, was responsible for so much of who I am. With Forry, it was *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, his monthly valentine to sci-fi, fantasy and horror, that confirmed and gurded my own quest, through prose and celluloid. With Ray, it was in his fiction – which I first encountered in the '80s through adaptations of his short stories in EC Comics reprints such as *Tales from the Crypt* and *Weird Fantasy* (see p.19) – in which I found a style and vision of the writing process that would forever shape my own. These brilliant comic adapfations led me to seek out the source material- a cherished collection of short stories that I would carry through my teenage years like a security blanket. In adulthood, I would keep up with Ray in all his permutations- screenwriter, fiction novelist, non-fiction author, poet, but most of all, an eternal Peter Pan-style magic man.

From the late '30s to the 2010s, right up until he couldn't physically do it anymore, Ray was a prolific creator. He penned hundreds of short stories (the format he was known for, many of which were adapted into different media), novels, essays and articles (often on science fiction or the nature of writing itself), audio books, children's stories, comic books, plays, radio (see p.21), television (nofably *The Ray Bradbury Theater* in the '80s, for which he wrote all 65 installments and introduced every episode) and movies (see p.22). On the strength of legendary works such as *The Martian Chronicles*, "Dandelion Wine," *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *The Halloween Tree*, "The Illustrated Man," "I Sing the Body Electric" and "A Sound of Thunder," he became one of the most famous writers of the century. His work spanned many genres, from coming-of-age tales, to murder mysteries, to fantasy, to horror and sci-fi, despite the fact that he resisted the label. Us genre fanatics are, of course, immediately drawn to his fantastical realms of aliens, monsters and other creatures – companions who keep us eternally young and wide-eyed.

Never as a boy would I have imagined Forry Ackerman becoming an actual flesh and blood friend and proxy grandparent, nor could I have conjured the bittersweet honour of introducing Ray, Forry's childhood pal, at a public memorial following Forry's passing in 2008. From that point forward, Ray and I became friends, gathering in Forry's name to share thoughts and memories. It was at one of these visits in the fall of 2011 that I recorded the following conversation in service of an upcoming book of reminisces about Forry. Accompanying me were my partners on said tome, author Dave Marchant and producer Earl Roesel (Earl has the distinction of being Forry's final caregiver).

Little did I realize that this was to be my last visit with Ray (that's us pictured above), as well as Ray's final interview, as he became too ill to do any others after this point. In light of his passing, it is all so clear now that this was a man fully aware of the finite days before him, proudly content to summarize in conversation a life examined and deemed well lived. That conversation follows, recorded in his sitting room – where his cherished cat, Halloween, was purring at his feet, shelves of books and classic movies surrounded him, and a magnificent sculpted Mr. Electrico stood sentinel by his side. I came upon Ray as he finished dictating his latest short story to his daughter Alexandra over the phone.

Thus speaks Ray Bradbury...



Beast Friends: *Ray Bradbury (left) and Forrest J Ackerman model masks made by Ray Harryhausen, and (above) surrounded by toys and books in his office*

You've remained prolific – how often do you write?
Every single day

Really? A story a day keeps the doctor away?
No, a story a week

Have you been doing that all of your writing career? One story a week?
That's the way I do it. That's the way I've been doing it all my life

How do you write these stories now? Do you write them by hand?
I dictate them over the phone to my daughter in Phoenix. She types them and sends them back to me

Your exposition has a very specific, sing-songy cadence to it. Can you see it in your head as you're dictating, because when I look at your words on the page–
It comes out of my mouth. [Laughs]

Jim Morrison once said, "An artist's true ability is not to create but to receive," almost as if you're a radio receptor and these words are out there coming into you and you're letting them come out. Is that true for you?
God goes like a tissue through this ear and comes out the other and He leaves the tissue behind. God goes in here and comes out there.

And leaves the tissue behind? And is that what comes out of you?
That becomes a poem, yeah

What do you do when you're about to write?
I get up every morning and throw up. Throw up at breakfast and clean up at noon

One of the things you always hear is "When are you going to grow up?" What do you think people mean by that?
You should never grow up. You should be in love with life. I am the world's greatest lover. I'm in love with life. I remember being born. I remember everything from the moment of my birth 'til now. I think Forry [Ackerman] had that same ability. I think he remembered being born too.

Of course, you and Forry were lifelong friends. How would you describe him?
He was the perfect twelve-year-old. I was a twelve-year-old, but he was a better twelve-year-old boy than I was

You would often go to see movies together, right?
Oh, yeah. Forry told me when there was a good movie coming up. Once, at the Alex Theatre in Glendale, there was a good film called *The Invisible Man Returns*, with Vincent Price. We went on a streetcar to see the film.

What kind of influence did he have on your career?
He loved to write stories and he got me writing my own stories. When I was seventeen, I came to his house and helped him to hectograph [an obsolete printing process involving metal plates] his magazine, *Imagination*. He listened to me tell my stories. When I was nineteen, he paid to have me write my own magazine, *Futuria Fantasia*. He paid for it completely. He paid for the stamps to send it out, he paid for the paper it was printed on, he paid for the ink that went on the paper. He caused me to create my own magazine for a whole year, four issues, when I was nineteen. That's why he was very important to me, and at the same time he was creating *Imagination*.

What other kinds of things did he do to help you out?
I didn't have any money, so when I needed some, I took books to Forry's house and sold them to him. He'd give me five bucks so I could afford to go out on a date.

He thought I was crazy. When he first met me, I was a teenager. I was wild and crazy but Forry put up with me.

How were you crazy?
I shot off my mouth. I talked too much.

You also became very good friends with Ray Harryhausen at one point.
I was eighteen years old and Ray Harryhausen was eighteen too. It was in August of 1948, so we became friends forever. Forry Ackerman introduced us.

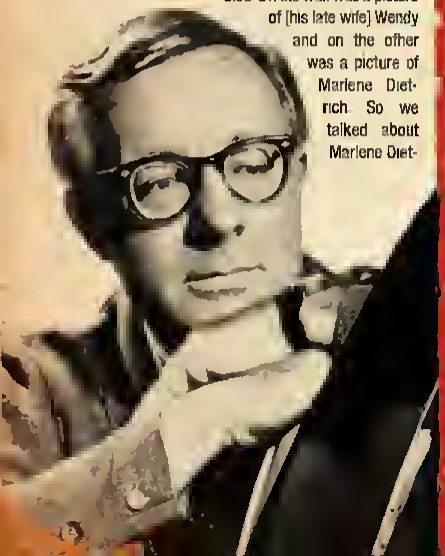
That was during WWII. Were you in the military?
No, I went down for my examination when I was 21 years old and the doctor said, "Read those letters over there." "What letters?" "On that card," he said. "What card?" "On the wall." I said, "What wall?" The doctor said, "Hand me those glasses." He looked at the glasses and said, "Do you really want to be in the service?" I said, "I don't know." "You are legally blind. You cannot enter the service. You are now 4-F. Goodbye."

This was also the heyday of Universal Monster movies. Do you have a favourite creature from the era?
Bride of Frankenstein.

Really? Why?
'Cause I knew her. Elsa Lanchester was a friend of mine.

Were you able to still see the magic in a movie such as Bride of Frankenstein, knowing Elsa, Boris Karloff and other actors?
Oh absolutely — by being in love. I loved meeting Elsa Lanchester. I loved meeting Charles Laughton, who played the Hunchback of Notre Dame. So, love is the answer to everything. No matter what you ask me, the answer is love.

Of course, Forry was the ultimate monster lover, right up to the end of his life. What were some of the things you talked about the last time you saw him?
I went to see him in his house two weeks before he died. On the wall was a picture of [his late wife] Wendy and on the other was a picture of Marlene Dietrich. So we talked about Marlene Diet-



HIS WORK IN EC COMICS DURING THE 1950s MADE **BRADBURY** A BIG NAME ON BOTH THE PAPERBACK AND COMIC RACKS



THE ILLUSTRATED MAN

BY PAUL CORUPE

"Just a note to remind you of an oversight," begins Ray Bradbury's firm but polite letter to EC Comics publisher Bill Gaines and editor Al Feldstein, noting that unauthorized adaptations of his stories appeared in their early 1950s horror and sci-fi comic books such as *Tales From the Crypt* and *Weird Fantasy*. "I feel this was probably overlooked in the general confusion of office work," Bradbury slyly added, "and look forward to your payment in the near future."

It's perhaps the most famous anecdote in EC Comics history, and for good reason – after Gaines promptly settled with the well-known author, he went on to buy the rights to more than 25 stories, giving publications such as *The Vault of Horror*, *Weird Fantasy* and *Crime SuspenStories* a literary flair their competitors lacked. But Bradbury's pithy horror tales, which often feature madness, pitch-black humour, far-fetched grotesquery and ironic twists, were perfectly matched to EC's usual storytelling style. Here are five of Bradbury's most bloodcurdling tales – which all just happen to have been published in 1953 – that fit perfectly within the pages of EC's horror publications. Most are available in reprinted collections, others can be found online.

The Black Ferris (*The Haunt of Fear* #18)

Author Jack Davis does an impressive job with this short story that Bradbury used as the basis for his later novel *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. The tale of two boys who learn the secret of an ominous carnival ride with the power to make its rider older or younger is given a light touch by Davis, who infuses the story's chilly fall ambiance with a few darkly comic twists and grotesque caricatures. But he still ramps up the tension for the appropriately ghoulish conclusion, as a carnival worker gets stuck on the wheel for a final deadly ride.

The Handler (*Tales From the Crypt* #36)

EC's "Ghastly" Graham Ingels actually made two passes at Bradbury's classic "The Handler." The first, an uncredited tale called "A Strange Undertaking," appeared in *The Haunt of Fear* #4. This more faithful version followed a few years later, in which an undertaker teased by townspeople gets his payback once they end up on his embalming table. It's easy to see why Gaines and Feldstein liked this one – the story's twisted take on revenge is quintessential EC stuff.

The Screaming Woman! (*Crime SuspenStories* #15)

Jack Kamen was the EC artist who adapted the most Bradbury stories, and this is probably his best work. A young girl is on her way home when she hears a woman's screams coming from beneath the ground. Frightened, she tries to convince her father of what she heard but he won't believe her until she repeats a song the woman was singing. From familiar EC territory that plays on fears of being buried alive to a more sentimental conclusion that's stamped with Bradbury's touch, Kamen balances the two aesthetics nicely with some strong graphic panels to deliver the final twist.

The Small Assassin (*Shock SuspenStories* #7)

New parents spiral into paranoid delusions as they convince themselves that their baby is trying to murder them. It's an appropriately deranged little tale in which gas heaters, late-night crying sessions and toys conspicuously left on a staircase take on a sinister edge. The art by George Evans is decent, if not particularly notable, letting the story's novel, if far-fetched, storyline take the spotlight.

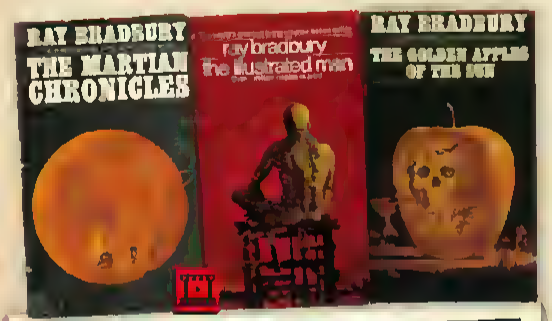
Touch and Go! (*Crime SuspenStories* #17)

Here's another Bradbury adaptation in which a character is broken down by increasingly irrational fears. Johnny Craig was among EC's brightest art talents – he's the guy that did those hilariously gruesome covers – and he delivers a particularly strong graphic take on "The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl," in which a killer is eventually consumed by a mania to remove every last fingerprint from the scene of the crime. Fingerprint imagery and impressive montages help to illustrate the murderer's madness, making this otherwise text-heavy story one of Craig's best works.

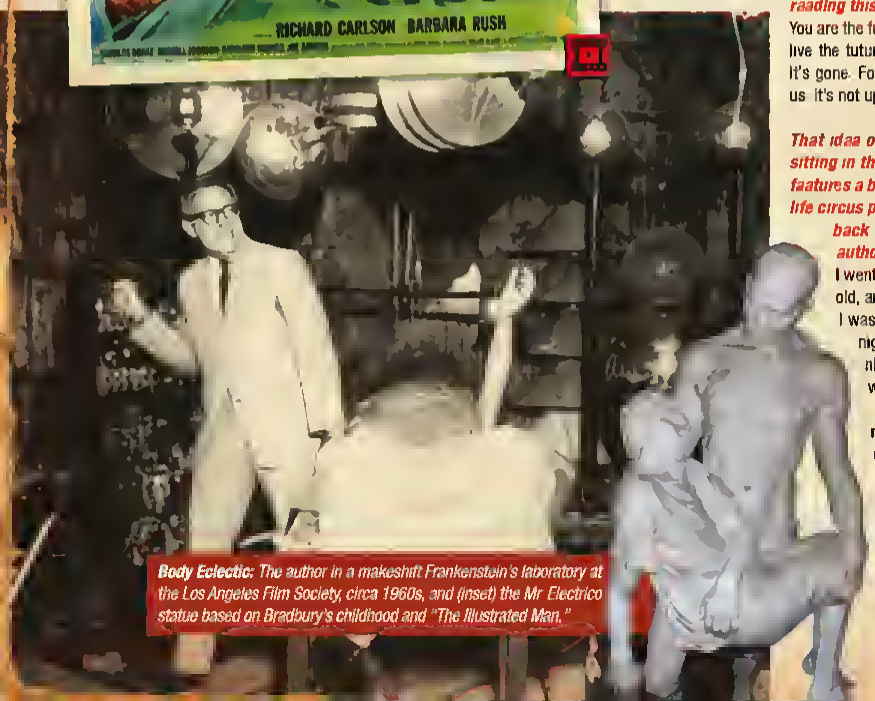
nch ... I [also] held his hand and looked into his face and said, 'Forry, you changed my life completely and I love you to eternity."

He often said to me that he didn't believe in an afterlife and that he really thought this was it. It was interesting because, for someone who was so interested in sci-fi and fantasy, I thought he'd have a belief in an afterlife. Did he ever talk to you about his beliefs?
No, he didn't believe in it and I don't believe in it. My afterlife is my children. Forry's afterlife is all of us children.

If you could see Forry one more time, what would you guys do together?







Body Eclectic: *The author in a makeshift Frankenstein's laboratory at the Los Angeles Film Society, circa 1960s, and (inset) the Mr. Electrico statue based on Bradbury's childhood and "The Illustrated Man."*

I'd go to see a reissue of *King Kong*. I went to Nebraska to see it with him, oh, 30 years ago.

So then, what is your favourite movie of all time?
Oh, God – *King Kong* is among the first of them because I saw it when I was twelve years old and it stayed with me for a lifetime. And I also saw, when I was twelve years old, *The Mummy* with Boris Karloff. I loved that movie too.

Where were you when you saw these?
[When I was] twelve years old, I lived in Tuscon. I saw those two movies in Tuscon.

Okay, your favourite author?
Poe.

Actor?
Charles Laughton.

Last time we spoke, you talked a lot about other lifeforms and other planets. You believe in that, right?
Absolutely, I do.

How can you believe in something you haven't actually seen?
I believe in the world we live in. Right now we live in a world with two million different species. There are two million butterflies in the world – we are not butterflies, are we? We've got rhinoceroses in the world – we are not rhinoceroses, are we? We've got whales in the world – we're not whales, are we? We've got a billion kinds of fish. A billion kinds of spiders. A billion kinds of dogs. A billion kinds of cats. In this world, we have a billion different species – somehow these species came up. The dinosaurs came up and disappeared. Where'd they come from and where'd they go? So, on other worlds there must be dinosaurs, there's gotta be butterflies, there's gotta be whales, there's gotta be us.

People are always saying, "We're living in the end times, the Apocalypse is coming!" You must've heard people saying that many times. .
They're stupid. Goddamn stupid.

What would you say to someone who says, "Mr. Bradbury, 2012 is the end of time because the Mayan calendar says so?"
You are forever, I am forever. That's the answer.

As someone who is such a futurian, what would you say to a young person reading this interview and wondering what lies ahead?
You are the future, you live it. You make it occur. If you didn't live the future, it wouldn't happen. The past is behind us, it's gone. Forever is behind us. The Apocalypse is behind us. It's not up ahead.

That idea of youth is embodied by the bronze statue sitting in the corner, created by Christopher Slatoff. [It features a boy being carried by "Mr. Electrico" – a real-life circus performer Bradbury met as a child – whose back is alive with 3-D tattoos, in homage to the author's famous story "The Illustrated Man."]
I went to see two circuses when I was thirteen years old, and when I came out that night, I couldn't walk. I was tired. So my father carried me home at midnight. That's my father carrying me home at midnight. It's also Mr. Electrico. I met Mr. Electrico when I was twelve years old, and he told me, 'Live forever!' So that's also Mr. Electrico carrying me, telling me to live forever. On the back of that statue are illustrations. That's the Illustrated Man too. So that's my father carrying me home, that's Mr. Electrico telling me to live forever and that's the Illustrated Man illustrating my life. A triple metaphor.

Were you very close to your father?
Yeah. [Reaches into his shirt pocket and with-

BROADCASTERS OF YESTERYEAR DISCOVERED THAT BRADBURY'S SHORT STORIES WERE IDEAL FOR STRIKING FEAR INTO RADIO AUDIENCES. WE UNCOVER FIVE OF THE GREATEST VINTAGE AUDIO ADAPTATIONS



SOUNDS OF THUNDER

BY JASON PICHONSKY

"THE SCREAMING WOMAN" – *SUSPENSE* (CBS – November 25, 1948)

"The Screaming Woman" was an unpublished short story when it first aired on *Suspense*, an early and highly successful radio anthology series that over the course of its twenty-year run, adapted a number of Bradbury's tales. Margret, a young girl, hears the screams of a woman seemingly buried alive and tries to tell her parents. However, the unbelieving adults turn against her, leading Margret to question who she should fear most: the screaming woman or the grown-ups she most trusted? Typical of radio in the 1940 and '50s, "The Screaming Woman" was performed live, with all sound effects created manually. A scene in which Margret attempts to dig up the screaming woman as the wind howls in the listener's ears captures the dread and futility of her situation as only radio can, by suggesting the setting but leaving room for the audience to visualize the darker details.

Hear it at archive.org/details/SUSPENSE4

"THE VELDT" – *DIMENSION X* (NBC – August 9, 1951)

Xpo [illegible] radio [illegible] fiction writer by adapting a number of his more futuristic stories, including "The Veldt," about a nursery that brings children's dreams to life via holographic projection. After their neglectful parents allow the nursery to effectively replace them as caregivers, the kids' dreams turn it into an imagined African veldt, a savage place where parents can be thrown to the lions. This is one of the darker versions of the tale produced for radio, as later imagining would tone down the violent climax. The sparse use of sound effects in scenes outside the nursery enables the lavish sound design for the nursery's veldt sections to effectively pull the audience into its savagery. Listeners can almost feel the sun baking down and smell the lion's kill.

Hear it at archive.org/details/OTRR_Escape_Singles

"ZERO HOUR" – *ESCAPE* (CBS – October 4, 1953)

Escape, a spinoff sister series to *Suspense*, was the first to adapt "Zero Hour" for radio. Capturing Cold War paranoia perfectly, the story was popular with producers, having been adapted at least eight times. In it, children across the country, including a girl named Mink, are playing a new game called "Invasion," for which they take orders from an imaginary general named Drill, and there's a "Zero Hour" set for five o'clock. Mink's mother believes there is more to this phenomenon than mere child's play, though. The drama starts out innocently enough, re-enforced by the authentic "aw, shucks" performances of the voice actors. But as Mink's mom awaits Zero Hour, her paranoia cultivates an increasing distrust of her daughter. The final moments end in genuine terror as the previously dialogue-heavy presentation is reduced to screams of fear, backed by an avant-garde theremin soundscape.

Hear it at archive.org/details/OTRR_X_Minus_One_Singles

"A SOUND OF THUNDER" – *BRADBURY 13* (NPR – May 21, 1994)

In 1994, sound engineer Mike McDonough created *Bradbury 13* for NPR radio. The series collected thirteen of the author's stories and gave them the Hollywood blockbuster treatment, in sound at least. Given carte blanche by Bradbury to adapt these tales, McDonough based his picks on their possibilities for sound design. While all of these adaptations are worth searching out, the standout episode is fan-favourite "A Sound of Thunder," a story of time-travelling dinosaur hunters who inadvertently change the future. McDonough's stereo mix and lush score surround listeners in a tense creature feature, conjuring up dinosaurs as real and *menacing* as any T. Rex that would rear its head ten years later in *Jurassic Park*. Go figure. the encounter with the creature is the highlight of this drama. Introduced by Bradbury himself, *Bradbury 13* also features scant narration by legendary voice actor Paul Frees.

The entire series is available at amazon.com *or* for download through audible.com

"THE NEXT IN LINE" – *FEAR ON FOUR* (BBC – December 31, 1992)

The exemplary BBC horror series *Fear on Four*, hosted by a dry-voiced Man in Black, continues to send chills down the spine of British listeners. "The Next in Line," the series' only Bradbury adaptation, may be a lesser-known tale from the writer, but in the hands of the show's producers, it gets a sinister treatment. This psychological fable is centred around a young woman vacationing in Mexico, who becomes morbidly distressed after a visit to a catacomb holding Aztec mummies, where voices of the dead beckon her to join their mausoleum. Audiences, especially if listening through headphones, are given intimate access to the protagonist's growing dementia, as the dialogue is delivered in eerie whispers, at least until the inevitable screaming starts.

Fear on Four is still broadcast on BBC Radio 4 Extra, and recent airings are available to stream through its website (bbc.co.uk). Until the BBC adds older shows to its archives, though, finding a copy of "The Next in Line" will take some sleuthing.

draws a watch.] My father gave me this watch when I went to Ireland to write [the screenplay for] *Moby Dick*. It was my grandfather's watch. So it is in my heart. This is my father and my grandfather. It's here in my heart every day and it ticks and makes my life alive. I've got it with me every day.

What is the appeal of circuses and carnivals for you? They've been a long-running theme in your fiction.

In *Fahrenheit 451*, Beatty is named for a lion tamer I knew when I was six years old, who was with the Hagenmack-Wallace circus. Clyde Beatty, the tamer of lions, became the character Beatty in the centre of *Fahrenheit 451*.

What is it about circuses that you love so much?

Because there are three rings performing all of life in front of you. Three different rings of life. So you can look at the three miracles.

What are the three miracles?

Life itself. Clowns, of course, performing all the things of life. And all the people up in the air on the trapeze. So that's what that's all about.

There's certainly a fearlessness to it all. What about you, though?

What scares you?

Not being alive scares me.

So that would be your greatest fear?

It's the only fear.

You say carnivals represent life and love and everything, but in Something Wicked This Way Comes there's also a sinister element to them...

Yeah, but that's the conflict. Life is an opposition of death. So *Something Wicked* has death at the centre of it and the man who plays the father represents life.

Most people don't realize that you directed a lot of that movie.

I directed the final version.

How did that come about?

I went to a preview of the film and the audience was dead. I came out of the theatre and stood with *my* daughter and my daughter asked, "What's going to happen next, Daddy?" I said, "I'm going to wait for the phone to ring." The next day, the phone rang. It was John Miller, the head of the Disney Studios. He said, "Will you come in and talk?" I said, "I'll be there!" So I went to the studio and stood in the doorway of



BRADBURY'S WORK WAS OFTEN IMPORTED TO TELEVISION AND MOVIE SCREENS, ALLOWING FOR A NEW WINDOW INTO HIS FANTASTICALLY STRANGE WORLDS. PRESENTING FIVE KEY WAYS TO WATCH HIS WORK COME ALIVE...

THE BODY ELECTRIC

BY H.S. BERMAN

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS (1953)

Based on the 1951 short story "The Fog Horn," this tale of a resurrected dinosaur on a rampage predates *Godzilla* by a year and is a *Mystery Science Theater 3000* fan's wet dream. For all the clichéd images of monster mayhem and pseudo-scientific babble, though, Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion animations give the titular beast more pathos and personality than any of its human co-stars. Despite its laughable script and dated execution, this Bradbury adaptation will probably survive through the ages.



FAHRENHEIT 451 (1966)

For pure alienation of audience, it's tough to beat French New Wave director François Truffaut's take on Bradbury's dystopian classic. From Oskar Werner's automaton-like portrayal of reluctant book burner Guy Montag to Julie Christie's yawnsome performances as both Montag's wife and schoolteacher Clarisse, this film can be slow for even the most committed Bradbury enthusiast. Yet, by the halfway mark, the cold set designs, gradual unraveling of Montag, and steady drumbeat about the survival of ideas succeed in making this a minor classic.

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES (1983)

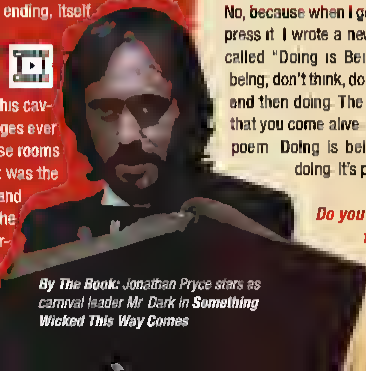
Famously ignored at the box office, this tale of a supernatural carnival that wreaks havoc on the residents of a small town is a rarity – a horror film for young people. Walt Disney Productions wanted to branch out into darker territory and got its money's worth here. Though softened by the reassuring presence of avuncular Jason Robards and some brief-but-cringe-worthy blathering about "love conquers all," the film – based on Bradbury's 1962 novel of the same name – is rife with disturbing images that make for riveting viewing for the twelve-year-old in all of us.

THE RAY BRADBURY THEATER: "THE PLAYGROUND" (1985)

The best episode of all six seasons of the TV series, "The Playground" manages to nail the oft-attempted, seldom-mastered evil children subgenre. Charles Underhill (William Shatner) is reluctant to let his six-year-old son play with the kids who turn up nightly at the nearby playground, a blue-lit concrete monstrosity covered with leaves and surrounded by a chain-link fence. Kudos to director William Fruet (*Death Weekend, Spasms*) for actually squeezing some range out of Shatner during the *Freaky Friday*-esque ending, itself uncharacteristically bleak for a writer who built a career on childhood nostalgia.

THE RAY BRADBURY THEATER INTRO

From the arrival of the author in an ornate elevator to his thoughtful march through his cavernous offices, this 35-second sequence may contain the most exciting moving images ever associated with Bradbury. Who didn't get a thrill each time he shuffled through those rooms choked with posters, dolls and other curios and modelled after his actual office? It was the closest thing to entering the mind of the man. "I just look around, find what I need, and begin. ... Out of all this, what do I choose to make a story? I never know where the next one will take me. And the trip: exactly one-half exhilaration, exactly one-half terror." While the terror doesn't always show up in Bradbury adaptations, he could've bottled the exhilaration felt by the young and the young at heart.



By The Book: Jonathan Pryce stars as carnival leader Mr Dark in ***Something Wicked This Way Comes***

John Miller's office and he looked up and said, "I hope you're not going to say, 'I told you so!'" I said, "No, let's make the changes. Make me the director, take out the musical score, it's terrible, rip out the whole goddamn score and let's find a new composer to make a new score for the film." We found a new composer, James Horner. There were missing scenes, so we shot the scenes where the father saved the sons. Early in the film, the father remembers he didn't save his son when his son was drowning. So I said there had to be a scene in the film where the father pulls his son out of the water. We shot the scene and put it in and I edited the film for the parts that didn't work, and I became the director. I'm very proud that I directed *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.

When you write, are you trying to inspire people? What would you say is behind your writing these days?

I fell in love with Shakespeare when I was very young. I fell in love with Alexander Pope. I fell in love with Jules Verne. I fell in love with H.G. Wells. I fell in love with movies. I've seen every movie ever made. So I give my love back to people. I say, "Go see a movie, go see a good one." If you can't see a new movie that's any good, go see an old one.

Do you often reread your stuff?

No. I'm blind, you see, so I have people read to me.

You have them reread your stuff to you?

Oh, and it's beautiful!

What are some of your favourites that you love to hear?

I had someone read my book *Death is a Lonely Business*. They read the opening chapter to me in the last few weeks and I cried when I heard it. It was wonderful. Go read that opening. It's just wonderful.

That's my favourite book of yours because I live in Venice Beach...

Being in this big red cart going down the beach and hearing a man saying, 'Death is a lonely business. death is a lonely business." That's in the first chapter.

J. D. Salinger wrote* The Catcher in the Rye *and a couple of short stories, such as "Franny and Zooey," and became a recluse. He says, "Well, that was all I had to say." You don't stop. Do you think you ever will?

No, because when I get a good idea, I've got to express it. I wrote a new poem just two weeks ago called "Doing is Being." It's all about doing is being, don't think, do! Doing is being coming alive and then doing. The more that you do, the more that you come alive. So I put all that into my new poem. Doing is being. You cannot be without doing. It's pure Zen. I'm a Zen Buddhist.

Do you think you'll ever run out of things to express?

I'm not old enough yet, no.

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A NEW IN-DEPTH DOCUMENTARY EXAMINES THE LASTING IMPACT OF

THE BIGGEST HORROR MOVIE EVER MADE



BLOOD IN THE WATER

BY AARON VON LUPTON

JAWS ISN'T JUST ONE OF THE BIGGEST HORROR MOVIES OF ALL TIME, IT'S ONE OF THE BIGGEST MOVIES OF ALL TIME, PERIOD. Released in 1975, the film gave birth to the modern summer blockbuster, set Steven Spielberg on a trajectory to becoming one of the most prominent directors in Hollywood, gave the world one of the most recognizable musical themes, and made legions of people afraid to set foot in the water.

Not surprisingly then, few films have been so dissected. Laurent Bouzereau's 1995 documentary, *The Making of Jaws*, which has been included on various LaserDisc and DVD releases of the film (including Universal's 30th Anniversary edition), and the BBC's 1997 documentary, *In the Teeth of Jaws*, covered much of the trou-





Bite Club (L to R) **Jaws** mechanical effects technician Roy Arbogast **The Shark is Still Working** producer James-Michael Roddy, **Jaws** art director Joe Alves, and FX artist Greg Nicotero with the shark he created for JAWSfest

THE MOVIE JUST BLEW ME AWAY, AND FOR THE REST OF THAT SUMMER IT WAS JUST *JAWS* ALL THE TIME.

PRODUCER JAMES-MICHAEL RODDY

bled production history of the film. (The refrain "the shark is not working" could be heard constantly by cast and crew, in reference to the various faulty mechanical sharks.) *Jaws* co-writer Carl Gottlieb wrote the definitive making-of book *The Jaws Log*, and *On Location –on Martha's Vineyard The Making of the Movie Jaws* by actress Edith Blake (a native of the island of Martha's Vineyard, where the movie was shot) told the production history from the perspective of the many locals who helped out and came to be involved in the production. And just last year, Matt Taylor's giant coffee-table book *Jaws: Memories From Martha's Vineyard*, detailed the production from a similar standpoint, though far more extensively and beautifully, with hundreds of behind-the-scenes photos.

What hasn't been examined as thoroughly is the movie's legacy. Enter *The Shark is Still Working*, written, directed, composed and produced by *Jaws* fans James Gelet, Erik Hollander, Jake Gove, Michael McCormack, and James-Michael Roddy. The documentary, which is featured on Universal's new Blu-ray release of the film (out August 14), covers not just the experiences of the cast and crew on set, but the impact of *Jaws* on future filmmakers, the movie industry and the sea of fans who obsessively collect everything *Jaws*.

Producer Roddy, a senior show writer for Walt Disney and former creative director at Universal Studios, where he helped create the annual Halloween Horror Nights park themes, describes the new documentary as a companion piece to Bouzereau's *The Making of Jaws*.

"Everyone knows that *Jaws* was a troubled production and went so far over budget, but what we wanted to do was tell a story about how this one film inspired more directors, shark researchers, actors and storytellers than almost any other film," he explains. "*The Shark is Still Working* is such a positive story because the movie created filmmakers like Kevin Smith, Steven Soderbergh and Bryan Singer, and effects artists like Greg Nicotero. We also wanted to talk about how this movie affected our culture, that it's not just a piece of entertainment but something completely pervasive. Even if you've never seen *Jaws*, you still know what those four notes mean when you hear someone humming them. I thought that was a really compelling idea for a companion piece to Laurent's documentary, and that's really what we always hoped our film would be."

The roots of the project took hold while Roddy was creative director of JAWSfest, an event held on Martha's Vineyard in 2005 to commemorate the film's 30th anniversary. While on the island working on various aspects of the festival – from the props museum to various location tours – he quickly got to know many of the islanders, and from them, heard many behind-the-scenes stories that he had never come across. Realizing that there were still *Jaws* tales to be told, he lined up interviews with various festival participants. From there, he decided that he wanted to keep going, digging deeper and deeper into the movie's history, finding people involved with the film and giving them their moment, whether it be trailer narrator Percy Rodriguez or Roger Kastel, who painted the original artwork for the cover of the book and, ultimately, the poster.

The Shark is Still Working is strictly a labour of love for the filmmakers. As such, they were under no studio timelines or guidance on how it should be made. Many of the interviews were conducted during 2005 and '06, and it was financed with the group's own resources. Once finished, the original cut clocked in at a whopping three hours. Obviously they had to take a bite out of that running time.

"We promised the people we spoke to that we would tell their stories," says Roddy. "So we started by screening it for them and getting their feedback. Then we started getting feedback from friends and peers,

and then filmmakers such as Kevin Smith and Frank Darabont, who helped us get it down to two hours — I would say literally 30 minutes was cut to make it a little less fan-heavy, from things like fans getting tattoos [although some of that footage does remain] to making replicas of the boat."

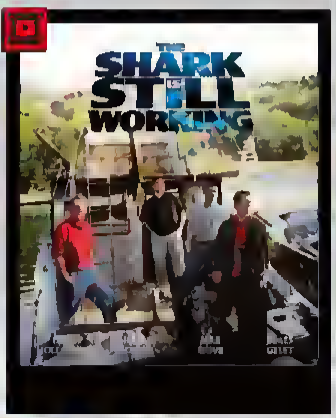
From there, Roddy and company were able to shop the film around, though they secretly held out hope that it would land with Universal, the company that originally released *Jaws*. The studio initially helped set up various festival screenings, which generated some buzz for the doc. Finally, in 2011, just as Roddy was contemplating releasing it independently, Universal called and expressed interest in including *The Shark is Still Working* on the Blu-ray release.

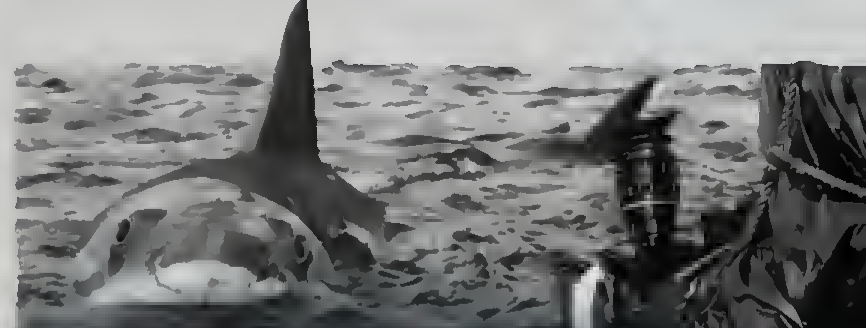
"We were thrilled," Roddy exclaims, "because it meant we'd created an official companion piece to our favourite film."

Unlike many other horror documentaries, *The Shark is Still Working* can claim to feature all of the key personalities involved in the film, with the obvious exceptions of actors Robert Shaw and Murray Hamilton (stubborn mayor Larry Vaughn), who both passed away years ago. The crown jewel is, of course, Spielberg, whose prominence in the documentary is impressive not just because of his star power, but for the sheer fact that he isn't sick of the subject by now.

"When we started on this endeavour, we were told we would never get Steven Spielberg to sit down and talk about *Jaws*," Roddy recalls. "We were told that he doesn't want to go back and relive that. But the way we were presenting the subject matter, he could see that this isn't about reliving the production of *Jaws*; this is about what *Jaws* did to culture. I think because of that he agreed to do it, and I've gotta tell you that my experience with Steven Spielberg is that he is a pure movie fan. He loves talking about movies and has a genuine affection for them."

Not only did Spielberg provide hours of his time to the project, he helped the group secure another key members of the *Jaws* family: composer John Williams.





JAWS PRODUCER RICHARD D. ZANUCK TAKES US BACK TO THE BEACH

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

BY JAMES BURRELL

WHEN *JAWS* SPLASHED ITS WAY ACROSS MOVIE SCREENS IN THE SUMMER OF 1975, MOVIE GOERS WERE UNPREPARED FOR THE ROLLER-COASTER THRILL RIDE THEY WERE EMBARKING UPON. Nor did they know that they were witnessing the birth of a new breed of cinema: the Hollywood summer blockbuster. But before it took a tremendous bite out of the box office and made its director, 27-year-old wunderkind Steven Spielberg, into a household name, *Jaws* started out as a novel by a struggling young writer named Peter Benchley.

Inspired by a 1964 news piece about Frank Mundus, a fisherman who had hauled in an enormous great white shark (supposedly weighing 2064 kg) off the coast of Long Island, New York, Benchley had proposed a non-fiction shark-themed book to well-known publisher Doubleday. The company, however, was more interested in a novel. Hammering out several drafts, Benchley submitted his final version of the story in January 1973, and the book – only titled *Jaws* a mere twenty minutes before it went into production – would be published in February 1974.

Upon learning of the novel's existence, producers Richard D. Zanuck and David Brown purchased the film rights for a reported $150,000. While sales of the book rose (it would eventually spend more than 40 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and move more than 20 million copies), the pair initially hired filmmaker Dick Richards (*Death Valley*) to direct the adaptation, only to replace him shortly thereafter with Spielberg, who had just finished directing his first theatrical effort, *The Sugarland Express*, for them. With Spielberg onboard, the story was streamlined (with several subplots removed) and Benchley's initial screenplay was revised by writer/actor Carl Gottlieb and playwright Howard Sackler – with contributions by writer/director John Milius and members of the cast (which included Roy Scheider as police chief Martin Brody, Robert Shaw as shark hunter Quint and Richard Dreyfuss as marine researcher Matt Hooper).

While filming got underway on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, in May 1974, *Jaws* would suffer a number of setbacks – from the crew's inability to shoot on water, to the continual malfunctioning of mechanical sharks – causing the 55-day shooting schedule to balloon to 159 days, and the $4 million budget to more than double to $9 million.

However, the additional expenditures paid off when the film was released on June 20, 1975, to positive reviews and long theatre lines. *Jaws* was the reigning box-office champ – and the first movie to earn $100 million – until the release of *Star Wars* two years later. The film still stands as one of the most successful motion pictures of all time, having earned approximately $470 million to date. Little needs to be said about Spielberg, who would go on to direct and produce several of the most popular movies ever made.

In honour of Universal's 100th anniversary, *Jaws* is being presented on Blu-ray for the first time on August 14. Digitally remastered and restored from its original 35mm elements, the two-disc release boasts such extras as the full-length documentary *The Shark is Still Working*, deleted scenes, outtakes and a look at the film's restoration process. To mark the occasion, *Rue Morgue* spoke with the man who helped bring Benchley and Spielberg's terrifying vision to life: veteran Hollywood producer and studio head Richard D. Zanuck, who died on July 13 at age 77.

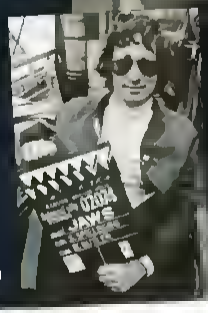
How did you become involved with Jaws?

David Brown, my producing partner at the time, and I got it off of Benchley's manuscript – and we didn't know Peter, we bought it just off of the manuscript. — We were able to get our hands on books early and just sweep them up quick, without having much information. We had no idea how we were going to do the shark in *Jaws*. Steven [Spielberg] and I have often looked back and said, "You know, if we had all of the tools that we have today, we wouldn't

heve made as good a picture" because we would have overdone the shark, if we could have just digitally done whatever we wanted.

Do you think that not seeing the shark very much made the film more suspenseful?

There's no question about it. And the irony about that is that the shark was in the script in the first scene. But [the mechanical shark] wasn't working. So it inspired Steven and the writers [Benchley and Carl Gottlieb] and myself to come up with alternatives. You just see that girl [Chrissie Watkins, portrayed by stuntwoman Susan Backlinie] being pulled back and forth in the water and then going down. You never see any sign of the shark, because we didn't have it, even though the script says it jumps out of the water and gets her. When it wasn't working, we added the barrels coming up and things like that to indicate the shark was there. But it was on dry-dock. Of course, with Johnny Williams' score and that theme – that represented the shark. Had we had the shark working, I think it would have spoiled it. We developed a whole sense of suspense. And everybody said, "Oh, how brilliant, they titillated us until they showed the shark." Well, that was not our intention. That was just good luck, which we thought was catastrophic at the time.



You'd produced several films prior to Jaws but that one really put your name on the map.

It was such a phenomenon that it changed the whole way [movies] are distributed in the summer. It was the first real summer blockbuster. It was the template for distribution patterns in the future, and that was true around the world, not just domestically. It didn't make any difference whether you were in a seaport town in South Africa or in Salt Lake City, the screams were just as loud. People who were in no danger swimming in the ocean were scared out of their minds by this – kind of a natural fear, a basic fear that we have of sharks.



Jaws did for swimming what Psycho did for taking showers.

I had been a swimmer and lived on the beach all of my life. I would swim long distances every morning. While we were making the picture in Martha's Vineyard, even I – who knew how fake the shark was and everything – would be swimming along and touch a piece of seaweed and get scared out of my mind. And I knew how phony everything was. So people were literally afraid to go into the water.

The film was such a huge hit that it changed the industry's view of monster movies or so-called "B-style" pictures.

Well, yeah, it took off like a rocket. Today, pictures open at number one for the weekend, possibly the second weekend, because there are such a massive number of theatres involved. But in those days, we were number one throughout the whole summer.

Jaws was also one of the earliest films to generate a large amount of tie-in merchandise – games, toys, books...

Yeah, I even had a toilet seat cover. The merchandising was huge on that [film]. It all goes into the gross revenue, you know. At that time, we never had any DVDs, obviously, or VHS cassettes.

What was your impression of the sequels?

Well, David [Brown] and I did *Jaws 2*. [Universal] did *Jaws 3* [3-D] and *4* [*The Revenge*] and we thought, "Well, how many times can a shark come back out of the water?" [For *Jaws 3*], we had developed a script, a comedy – because that's the only way we thought we could do it – called *Jaws 3, People 0*. And they went ahead and made part four, which was pretty lame.



Talent Pool *(clockwise) Richard D. Zanuck (front) and David Brown, (L. to R) Brown, Steven Spielberg and Zanuck on set and Spielberg holding the film's toothy clacker*

IF WE HAD ALL OF THE TOOLS THAT WE HAVE TODAY, WE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE AS GOOD A PICTURE.

PRODUCER
RICHARD D. ZANUCK

I've read about a possible re-release of the original film, with added 3-D effects.

I don't know anything about that. They're re-releasing everything in 3-D these days. So I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

You've produced various types of genre films; do you think horror movies take a special approach?

I don't know, because if you run through my credits, it's very diverse and ... I didn't really do horror per se, but I did do sci-fi pieces like *Planet of the Apes*, *Fantastic Voyage*, things like that.

Isn't Jaws a horror film?

Well, that can't be called a horror picture, really. It's more of man versus beast. Or at least that's the speech I delivered [to the MPAA], because they wanted to give it a stronger rating. I said, "There's nothing horrific about this; this is man versus an animal," and I convinced them to give us the lower [PG] rating.

After 50 years in the industry, what is it that drives you to keep making films?

It's very simple. I really have been brought up in that world and have thought about nothing else. I know the studio life, lived it as a kid, and it's always been my burning desire to make movies. And that hasn't diminished. I'm 77 now and am as active as can be. People say, "Don't you want to retire someday?" And I say, "Well, I give that as much thought as I do suicide." No, I just like doing what I'm doing.

"Spielberg asked about who we hadn't interviewed, and he said, 'If you're talking about the impact, you've really gotta interview John Williams.' We told him that we'd been approaching his representation unsuccessfully and Spielberg just looked over to his assistant and said, 'Go downstairs and get John.' The next thing you know, John Williams walks into the room and Steven says, 'John, I need to go get something to eat real quick, I know you are busy, but can you give these guys 30 or 40 minutes? We are talking about *Jaws*.' And suddenly I had two of the most amazing, respected storytellers in the room to talk to about the movie."

Aside from Spielberg and the aforementioned others, *The Shark is Still Working* includes stories from Carl Gottlieb, production designer Joe Alves, producers Richard D. Zanuck (see sidebar for an interview with him) and David Brown, actress Susan Backlinie, actor Jeffrey Kramer, shark experts Ron and Valerie Taylor, stuntman Dick Warlock, and filmmakers Smith, Singer, Robert Rodriguez, Tom Savini, Eli Roth and M. Night Shyamalan. The only personality that Roddy truly regrets not connecting with is stuntman Teddy Grossman, who is remembered for having his leg chewed off during the lagoon attack sequence. According to Roddy, Grossman was simply too busy travelling and working, even though he is now in his 80s.

One of the more unexpected interviewees is Charlie Benante, drummer for metal legends Anthrax. "When we started this project, we were really looking for people who were fans of *Jaws*, as well as people that *Jaws* had somehow inspired within the artistic entertainment realm," says Roddy. "Charlie contacted us and just said, 'I'm a huge *Jaws* fan,' and it was one of those great examples of diversity. Here is somebody who is as different as you can get from somebody who just collects the novels or posters. Here is a guy who is a professional drummer in a very genre-type band who also loves *Jaws* and says it inspired him."

As for Roddy himself, he fell in love with the film at age seven, when his dad drove past a shopping mall that had a huge ad for the movie. His father agreed to take him to the film the following weekend.

"There are three things that little boys love: sharks, dinosaurs and monsters," notes Roddy. "It's in our DNA. So when I heard 'shark,' I was in. The movie just blew me away, and for the rest of that summer it was just *Jaws* all the time. I took my kiddie pool and put it underneath my slide and I would slide down it pretending I was Quint. I would take my *Star Trek* action figures so that Kirk became Brody and Scotty became Quint and McCoy became Hooper. When they sold the little replica shark, my summer was complete."

As for his own views of the lasting impact of the film, Roddy sees its primary importance in the summer blockbuster trend that it created. It has been well documented that *Jaws* was the first true "event" film to be released during the summer, a season previously reserved for lower-profile movies, while the spring and end of the year saw studios' priority releases. Looking at this year's summer films -- a lineup that includes *The Avengers*, *Prometheus* and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* -- the trend started by *Jaws* is still alive and well; in fact, the movie's success made it the highest-grossing film in history at the time. According to boxofficemojo.com, which tracks theatrical earnings for features, the movie has made more than $470,000,000 to date, not including various home video and DVD releases, all the tie-in merchandise or the sequels.

Fans of the subsequent films in the franchise will notice the absence of any significant discussion of *Jaws 2*, *Jaws 3-D* or *Jaws: The Revenge* in *The Shark is Still Working*. Roddy says that he felt these films simply don't share the powerful legacy of the original, despite being a fan of the first sequel himself.

"It just didn't seem like anybody was really passionate about talking about the sequels. *Jaws 2* never made anybody want to be a filmmaker the way *Jaws* did."

Roddy is currently in the midst of a different type of project, a documentary about Monster Kids, the grown-up fans of classic monster movies from various eras. He hopes to dispel the myth that there is something wrong with children who love horror, and to explain the enduring appeal of monster movies in general.

"These films and these stories are not going to go away, and there is nothing wrong with liking them. In fact, it's actually beneficial for kids to watch them because it makes them use their imagination."

Hopefully the new film won't take nearly as long to get a release as *The Shark is Still Working*, which was initially conceived a decade ago. After spending so much time immersed in analyzing and discussing all that is *Jaws*, Roddy maintains that he is in no way tired of the subject. Indeed, his love for the film has only grown.

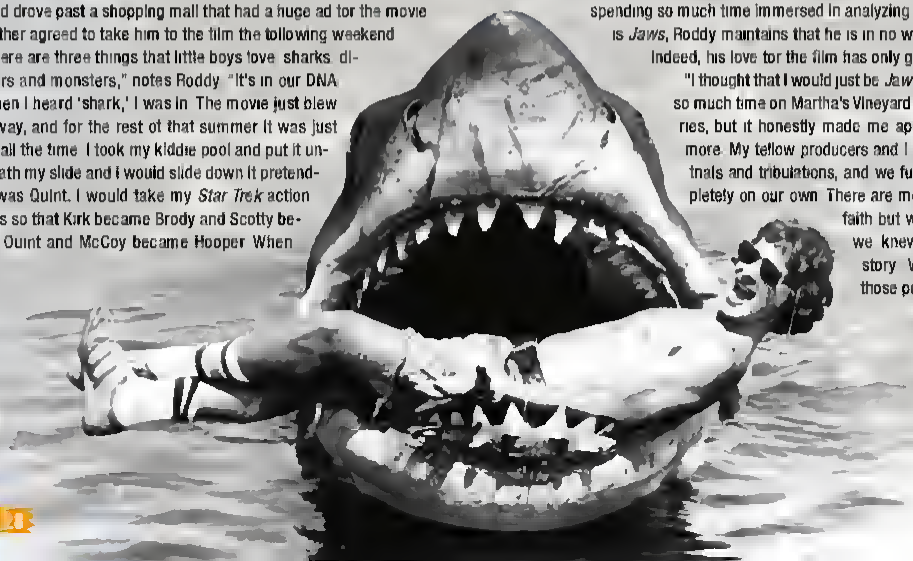
"I thought that I would just be *Jaws*-ed out after spending so much time on Martha's Vineyard and hearing these stories, but it honestly made me appreciate the film even more. My fellow producers and I went through so many trials and tribulations, and we funded the project completely on our own. There are moments when you lose faith but we kept going because we knew we had to tell this story. We didn't want to let those people down."



Back Into The Water *(clockwise from top left) Steven Spielberg and James-Michael Roddy, Roddy and Richard Dreyfuss, and Roy Scheider*

MY EXPERIENCE WITH STEVEN SPIELBERG IS THAT HE IS A PURE MOVIE FAN.

JAMES-MICHAEL RODDY



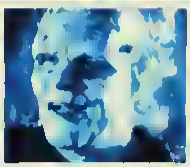



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FUELLED BY METAL AND '80s HORROR MOVIES, **DAN MUMFORD'S** ART GIVES EVEN THE FIERCEST BEASTS A TOUCH OF GRACE

THE FERAL CANVAS



BY **MOANER T. LAWRENCE**

IF THE NIGHT GREW MUSCLES, DAN MUMFORD WOULD BE ITS TATTOOIST, ADORNING EVERY STRIATION WITH VIVID HUES.

Think psychedelic scratch art, in which ink takes up most of the frame and colourful strokes seemingly merge for a simultaneously grotesque and elegant depiction of some frightening creature on a canvas of tendons and ligaments. His immediately eye-catching work has been commissioned by companies as large as Nike and Adidas, adorned album covers and merch for bands such as The Devil Wears Prada, Trivium, Gallows, The Black Dahlia Murder and Whitechapel, and appeared on T-shirts for spooky swag companies, including Zombie Liquorice and Electric Zombie.

Mumford traces his early artistic interest to his father, whose collection of '60s-era DC comic books and love of genre movies introduced him to brightly coloured, otherworldly imagery at a young age.

'Anything fantastical, with creatures or different worlds and universes was of interest to me," recalls the London, UK-based illustrator. "When I was old enough, my dad introduced me to classics like *Alien* and *The Terminator* and also the slightly less obvious choices like *Big Trouble in Little China*. I think the first time you watch any movie like *Aliens*, *Predator*, *Friday the 13th* or any number of those classic series, it stays with you – the mystery behind those figures, the way they were created, the look and the realism of them – CGI has genuinely ruined that. I can't think of a movie or film that has influenced or affected me in the same way since."

Bitten by the drawing bug, Mumford eventually began creating macabre masterpieces of his own. Using strictly pen and pencil at first, the artist later worked exclusively in Adobe Photoshop until recently, when, yearning to return to his roots, he combined the two approaches. Today, he begins by sketching out one of his almost vascular-looking designs in pen or pencil and then recreates his idea in Photoshop. ("It's less messy and you can afford to make mistakes!") Among Mumford's most prominent pieces of late are tributes to *Halloween*, *The Evil Dead* and *Friday the 13th* for Dark City, a UK art gallery that specializes in limited edition screen-printed movie- and music-inspired artwork from across the globe.

"[The *Friday the 13th* poster] was a collaborative vision with Ross from Dark City, actually," he explains. "He often has a main idea and then I try to bring it to life. We wanted to make it creepy and allude to Jason Voorhees, even though in actual fact it's his mother holding the knife, as it's the first film!"

Another of Mumford's most recent creations is a T-shirt design called "Gargoyle Demon" for American deathcore band Whitechapel, which features a hellhound-style Cthulhu rendered in a pose and colour palette that's rather unorthodox compared to the usual depictions of the Lovecraftian god.

"It takes cues from Cthulhu and also from how we often see gargoyles," he says of the piece's mazy, red and blue linework. "I just wanted to make something nice and symmetrical that looked cool, really."

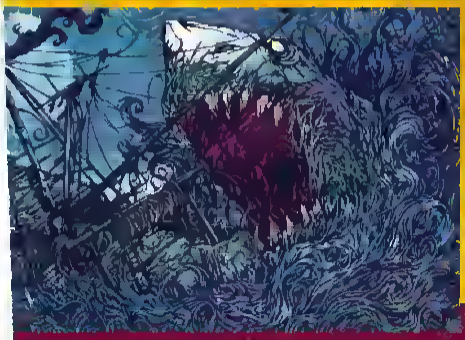
Horror movies from the '80s and '90s – including *The Thing*, *Dr. Giggles* and *The Fly* – have been both the subject of and inspiration for many of Mumford's tightly wound, sinuous works, but it was actually his teenage hobby of playing bass guitar "in a few crappy bands" that initially opened the door for him as a visual artist. After taking a hiatus from his musical endeavours to pursue illustration at the University of Brighton, his connections to the music community led to opportunities to design images for other bands, including his breakthrough piece for British hardcore punk group Gallows.

"The band was becoming huge at the time, and this obviously meant that my work was getting a lot of exposure," Mumford explains. "I got a lot of work and fans from the projects I did for them and I have to say it's some of my favourite work."

Soon, Mumford was fielding requests from all manner of metalcore bands looking to have his creations give their audio aberrations and clothing a face. But while most projects span one to five days, others can take weeks – a misconception that Mumford says has resulted in frustration on numerous occasions.







Lines Must Be Drawn: *(clockwise from top) Dan Mumford's tribute to* ***The Thing****, cover for Gallows'* ***In the Belly of the Shark****, Whitechapel's "Gargoyle Demon," and (opposite) a T-shirt design from Mumford Clothing's series The Heretic.*







Art Of Darkness: *Mumford's* ***Friday tha 13th*** *art print, (top right) his* ***Evil Daad*** *poster and one of his many T-shirt designs for The Black Dahlia Murder*

'I have had clients ask me to do things in completely unreasonable time conditions, or think that changing something on a piece when it's finished is really easy. It's not!" he asserts. "My work can take a long time to create, and I think it's funny that some people think I just click my fingers and it's done in a few hours, when there's a lot more to it than that.'

With his designs in high demand, the next logical step was to start a merchandise company of his own, which he did in 2009, called Mumford Clothing. His first series, "The Heretic," told a tale of the occult and supernatural through the medium of T-shirts – a strikingly detailed collection emblazoned with skulls, demon lords, bats, fire and brimstone – which was a departure from his somewhat trademark focus on predatorial animals such as sharks, bears, wolves and owls. Mumford insists that there's no exact science to how he picks what to print for his brand.

"I enjoy those animals and the shapes and look of them – they are fun to draw, essentially," he offers. 'And yeah, I often make them look quite feral on purpose. I just try for something that works well as a tee."

In early 2011, Mumford took on another new project when he ended his hiatus from music and formed a band called Landis, in which he plays bass and sings backing vocals. Inspired by heavy outfits such as Meshuggah and Candiria, he describes the group's music as 'hardcore, but with a little bit of a progressive bent." To date, they've released a four-song EP called *Rotten to the Core*, which is currently up for download at soundcloud.com/landisband.

'We just want to make music that we enjoy and have a good time doing it,' Mumford says. "We aren't interested in taking over the world. Not yet anyway."

The recent boom in illustrative art and posters has kept him too busy to focus on much outside of his design pursuits, though. Considering his love for '80s horror, he finds the emerging trend of genre films taking a more nostalgic approach both exciting and inspiring.

"Hell, yes! I think all film and media should go this route," he exclaims, jokingly. "Seriously, though, *Prometheus* looks phenomenal. *Beyond tha Black Rainbow* also looks great, and the *Dead Space* [video game] series is fantastic as well. I'm a huge gamer, and *Dead Space 2* was pretty much a perfect game for me. It hit all the right notes. Bring it on, keep the renaissance coming!"

When asked if there's still a beloved horror movie that he hasn't done a piece for yet, Mumford doesn't hesitate. "*Aliens*. I've done my fair share of *Aliens*-inspired pieces, but to actually do an homage to H.R. Giger's beautiful beast would be nice. It's outright one of my favourite films ever."

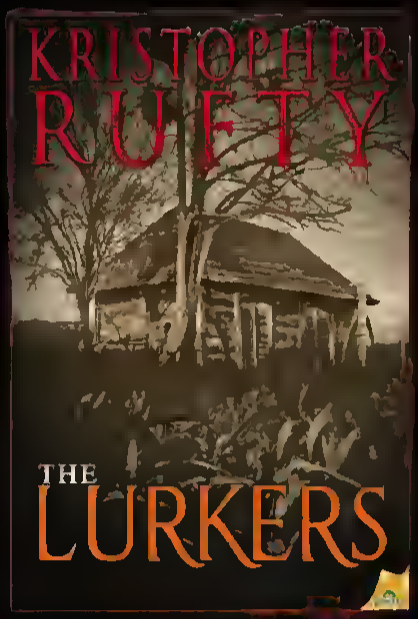
Despite his list of high-profile clients and an ever-swelling portfolio, Mumford is still reluctant to accept that he's become a career artist.

"I still think it's all going to end and collapse in a mess. But I'm certainly in a great position right now. I guess it was two years ago, when I moved into my new studio, that it genuinely clicked for me – I have my own space and I really am my own boss, I answer to no one else and all the responsibility is on me. It's amazing and terrifying at the same time."

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THE AWAKENING PITS A DIEHARD SUPERNATURAL SKEPTIC AGAINST A HOUSE WITH A HORRIBLE PAST.

FAITH & PHANTOMS

by PHIL BROWN

THE RECENT MINI-REVIVAL OF CINEMATIC GHOST STORIES THAT INCLUDES HAMMER'S *THE WOMAN IN BLACK* AND TI WEST'S *THE INNKEEPERS* GROWS BY ONE WITH ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE TITLE THAT'S BEEN MISSING FROM NORTH AMERICAN SCREENS UNTIL NOW: A HAUNTING BRITISH GEM CALLED *THE AWAKENING*. After its world premiere at last year's Toronto International Film Festival and a critically acclaimed run in Britain last fall – garnering praise from no less than director Ridley Scott, who called it the best film of 2011 – *The Awakening* hits North American theatres on August 10.

The film's screenwriter, Stephen Volk (*Ghostwatch*, *Gothic*, *The Guardian*), was heavily influenced by the 1898 Henry James novella, *The Turn of the Screw*, about a governess who suspects the gothic home she's working in may be haunted, and Jack Clayton's masterful 1961 cinematic adaptation of that story, *The Innocents*. In fact, Volk says he initially envisioned his movie as a sequel to *The Innocents*, one that had him imagining the character of Flora (one of the governess' young charges involved with the supposed haunting, who is sent away before that film's climax) at a different stage in her life.

"What if Flora grows up to be a skeptical ghost hunter and is in denial about what happened to her as a child, only to return to that house to confront her past?" asks Volk. "I was always interested in that tension between whether it was all in her mind or if the ghosts really existed, which I think is a nice tightrope to walk when you do these kinds of stories."



When the writer eventually sold the project to BBC Films, the producers suggested that a film so heavily tied to a book that's more than 110 years old may not be the best approach to attracting contemporary audiences. Thus, *The Awakening* shifted slightly to tell the story of professional skeptic Florence Cathcart (Rebecca Hall), a technology-savvy intellectual specializing in debunking supernatural hoaxes in post-WWI England, during the height of the spiritualism craze. She's summoned to a boarding school by a frightened teacher (Dominic West) and a paranoid housekeeper (Imelda Staunton) to investigate sightings of the restless spirit of a young boy who died under mysterious circumstances. As the ghostly occurrences at the school (including a particularly disturbing dollhouse that inexplicably showcases events taking place in the building as they happen) become increasingly harder to explain away, and her sanity is questioned, Florence tries to uncover the connection between the school and her own shrouded past.

The Awakening still carries echoes of *The Innocents* in theme, tone and style, though, which has been noted by many critics. It was also a project that allowed Volk to revisit the supernatural skepticism that was central to his 2005 British television series *Afterlife*.

"I find it an interesting dramatic device because I think if you leap into a supernatural story and no one has a sense of doubt, it can be quite unrewarding," he explains. "That's not how most people would react to the situation and it's particularly true of horror audiences. It's the only genre I can think of where people come into the cinema with folded arms saying, 'Okay, scare me.' They actually defy you to give them the effect they came to get."

The writer's appreciation for skeptics proved fortunate, given that the first-time feature director who eventually came onto the project, British TV drama stalwart Nick Murphy, was one himself. Murphy's cynical attitude toward certain aspects of horror cinema gave the director a unique approach to Volk's supernatural tale.

"The movies in the genre that I am least scared of are the ones where basically I know the form," explains Murphy. "What I mean bluntly is, a man going out into the woods by himself with a torch saying, 'Who's out there? What's that sound?' That's somewhat scary because I don't want the guy to be ripped up, but it isn't good drama because the guy doesn't feel like a real person. I find it undermines otherwise decent films if characters, for the sake of the cinematic imperative, behave in a way that is not consistent with their [personalities]. ... I think the best works of the genre create a world that the protagonist and the audience can't fathom. That in itself is scary."

Stripping away those traditional trappings does translate into plenty of scares, but *The Awakening* also works as a character piece, which has led to festival nods, awards and praise. As a result, the director – who at the outset had little interest in horror – now plans to return to the genre.

"I'm very proud of the film, but I didn't come away from it thinking that I'd mastered the genre by any means," he says. "I think there are flaws in it that I would like to go back and undo. That's just the nature of filmmaking."

the life and death of a porno gang

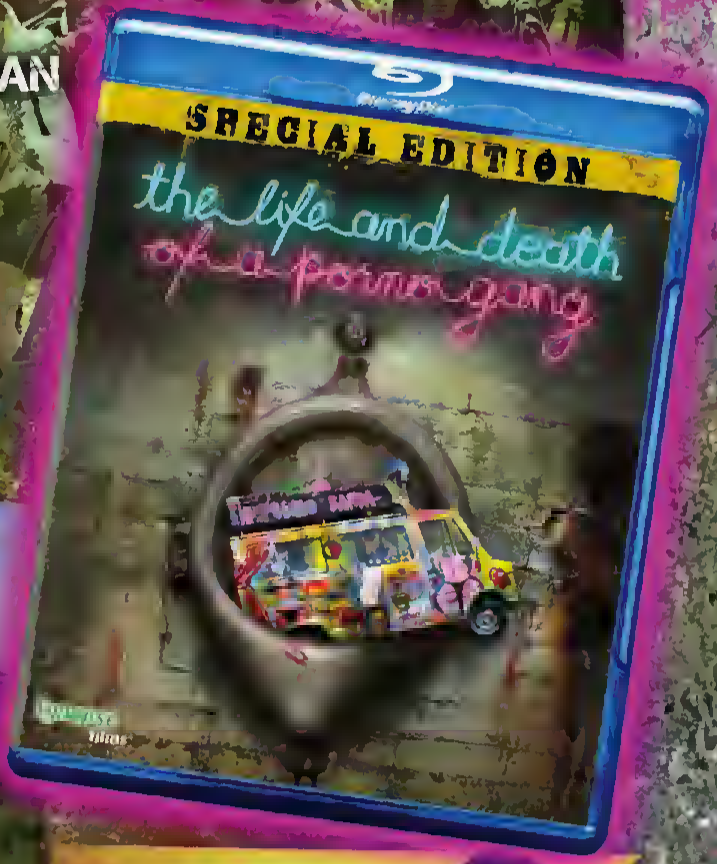
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SOMEWHAT ALIENATING

PROMETHEUS

Starring Noomi Rapace, Michael Fassbender and Charlize Theron
Directed by Ridley Scott
Written by Damon Lindelof and Jon Spaihts
Twentieth Century Fox



When Ridley Scott announced that he was returning to the *Alien* universe, it was predicted the result would be either a spectacular game-changer or a colossal failure. Oddly enough, *Prometheus* falls somewhere in the middle.

Set 50 years before *Alien*, *Prometheus* follows Weyland Industries' flagship and crew to the ass end of space to research the true origin of our species. It goes without saying that things do not end well, as they discover the remains of an ancient civilization (built by a people dubbed "The Engineers") and the experiments they left behind – specifically, a black "primordial ooze" directly tied to the human race's own evolution, which wreaks major biological havoc when it's unleashed.

Heavily inspired by Erich von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*, the Cthulhu mythos and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Prometheus* is less a horror epic than a return to high-minded sci-fi that's perpetually tripped up by inconsistent characterization and a muddled script with no solid narrative logic. Scott has made it clear that this is no precursor to *Alien* – it's merely set in the same world – yet he frequently trots out pieces of fan service (e.g., proto face-huggers) to remind us that we are watching a prequel. There are plot holes aplenty, but worse, the film's otherwise intelligent characters make very stupid decisions merely to advance the plot – a narrative boneheadedness that's just lazy in a film with such lofty aspirations.

Nevertheless, *Prometheus* isn't a complete failure. As is expected, it's gorgeous to behold. The set design (with inspiration from H.R. Giger) and cinematography are truly meant for the big screen, with several set pieces rivaling anything moviegoers have seen previously. The visual effects, particularly the enigmatic Engineers and the assorted creatures borne of their handiwork, are largely practical (at Scott's insistence) and simply stunning. And though most of the actors can't compensate for the flat script, Noomi Rapace – in the ersatz Ripley role of Dr. Elizabeth Shaw – makes for a convincing heroine, and Michael Fassbender, as inquisitive android David, turns in a mesmerizing performance.

A tighter script and a clearer focus on just how much *Prometheus* would crib from *Alien* would have elevated the movie considerably. As it stands, it's an ambitious mess – a film of big ideas with moments of brilliance, plagued by the most pedestrian of storytelling errors.

RON MCKENZIE

NOT A SUM OF ITS PARTS

[REC]³ GÉNESIS

Starring Leticia Dolera, Diego Martin and Javier Botet
Directed by Paco Plaza
Written by Paco Plaza and Luiso Berdejo
E1



The *[REC]* machine was running pretty well, the last time I checked. *[REC]* (2007) showed us the right way to configure a low-budget, first-person camera zombie movie by setting it in a dark, claustrophobic apartment complex and building a mystery about the source of the outbreak. *[REC]²* (2009) kicked it up a gear by lubing the zombie movie formula with an unexpectedly demonic explanation for the infestation. The success of the series (leading to an American remake and its sequel) meant that co-creators Jaume Balaguero and Paco Plaza would each get an opportunity to return to the *[REC]* universe. First up: Plaza's prequel *[REC]³ Genesis*, co-written by Luiso Berdejo who helped pen *[REC]* and directed the woefully underrated *The New Daughter*. With a back story to explore, the components are in place for maximum horsepower, yet this one sputters after the first act.

We begin at a wedding, where the first-person camera comes courtesy of the event photographers. In reference to *[REC]*, an uncle, who's also a veterinarian, was bitten by a dog earlier in the day – better pay attention to him. While he gets sicker, we get to know the lovestruck bride and groom and various eccentric relatives, until the dance, when the inevitable shit hits the inevitable fan. It's a fantastic sequence of bloody mayhem that abruptly stops for the opening credits (!), and we then switch to regular camera mode, which swiftly kills the urgency of the action.

But it's not only that – the filmmakers also pour boring juice in the tank and turn *[REC]³* into a standard-issue zombie movie with people running around a mansion trying to escape the ghouls, and sometimes barricading themselves in rooms. We do see the bride

kicking ass with a chainsaw while in her wedding dress, but that's both try-hard and unoriginal. Surprisingly, we don't even get that expected back story fleshed out, though we do get the occasional good gore gag – but there are also way too many wacky high-jinks, which ruin whatever atmosphere carried over from the previous films and the effective opening.

More wreck than *[REC]*, *Genesis* is not the kind of series overhaul anyone wanted. You know what they say about reinventing the wheel.

DAVE ALEXANDER

PRESIDENT VAN HELSING

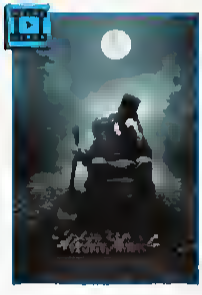
ABRAHAM LINCOLN: VAMPIRE HUNTER

Starring Benjamin Walker, Dominic Cooper and Rufus Sewell
Directed by Timur Bekmambetov
Written by Seth Grahame-Smith
Twentieth Century Fox

I only need one word to review *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*: ludicrous. Oh, you want more?

It's B-movie tromage with A-list production values that starts at eleven and stays there, full of vignettes meant to make the characters endearing. (They don't.)

This live-action cartoon kicks off when Abe is still a boy and witnesses a slave, who also happens to be his friend, get a beating and intervenes. When this later leads to the murder of his mother at the hands of a vampire, he is imbued with an all-consuming need for vengeance, which propels him through scenes that include his chance encounter with a vampire hunter, his indoctrination into their ranks, and the early missions that follow. The scenes are efficiently formulaic, each fitting a little too neatly into the next. Even Lincoln's courting of his future wife is by-the-numbers. And as he fights bigger and badder vampires and begins his own political journey, all those people (from his slave friend to the shopkeep who first hired him as a young man) are there by his side, to become his official aides. Unbelievable, much? What's worse is that the vampires don't even need to be vampires, apart from the blood-drinking, they could be interchanged with any other power-hungry monster.



Of course, the script, which delves into slavery and patriotism with equal shallowness is piled high with groaners, so that's detrimental enough. Characters spout pointless exposition to no one in particular, Abe's wife accuses him of keeping the vampire hunter thing a secret, when in fact he told her point blank earlier in the film and she just refused to believe it. There *may* be some enjoyment to be had here if you can completely turn off your brain, and if you are not a fan of physics (yes, even the fight sequences are overblown and laughable), because the movie does have cool visuals (it, at times, a bit plastic thanks to bucketloads of CGI). But sadly, expecting any more from *ALVH* would be as ludicrous as the fact that this empty-headed big-budget outing got made in the first place.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



[REC]³ Genesis: A not-so-fine mess.

CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN

THE DEVIL'S CARNIVAL

Starring Sean Patrick Flanery, Emilie Autumn and Terrance Zdunich
Directed by Darren Lynn Bousman
Written by Terrance Zdunich
Empire Film & Entertainment Group



Completely loathing the ill treatment that their surreal musical fantasy *Repo The Genetic Opera* received from distributors, writer Terrance Zdunich and director Darren Bousman decided to go a different route with the release of their latest outing and loaded everything into a van for a 42-day road trip to screen the film in 32 cities across North America. Audiences lucky enough to get tickets to see *The Devil's Carnival* were treated to an incredible multimedia event that included burlesque shows, carnival freaks, costume contests and Q&As with the creative duo and anyone else they happened to bring along for the ride.

Set within the confines of what appears to be a dilapidated carnival ground, the film follows three lost souls who have just arrived in Hell and are desperately trying to figure out how they got there – and, more importantly, how they can escape. As the movie progresses, we learn that they're being judged by Lucifer himself, played staggeringly well by Zdunich, in a plot based on Aesop's *Fables*.

Though it may be confusing at times (e.g., why is a woman who has made some poor choices selecting boyfriends being condemned to Hell?), *The Devil's Carnival* is aptly held together by the competent performances of a talented cast, in addition to numerous intoxicating musical numbers, especially the moody opus, "In All My Dreams I Drown." With a running time of only 45 minutes, there are points in which it seems rushed, resulting in characters and landscapes that aren't explored as thoroughly as they probably should be. But Bousman is quick to point out that this is only the first of what will hopefully be a series of films about the battle being waged between upstairs and downstairs, so to speak.

Either way, even if you weren't lucky enough to catch it during its whirlwind tour, look for it when it gets released on DVD because this is one helluva show that's most certainly bound for cult classic status.

LAST CHANCE LANCE

LIKE CLOCKWORK

BEYOND THE BLACK RAINBOW

Starring Eva Allen, Michael Rogers and Scott Hylands
Written and directed by Panos Cosmatos
Magnet Releasing

I've never come across as many reviews advising me to get stoned before watching a movie than I did for *Beyond the Black Rainbow*. Could it be because the film's 110-minute runtime is derived from only eleven pages of script, and therefore heavy on the visuals?

It begins with a video recording from Dr. Marcuno Arboria (Scott Hylands), claiming to have found the path to contentment and inviting the viewer to indulge in his discovery at his Arboria Institute. Cut to 1983, when the building seems nearly abandoned, save for a skeleton crew of nurses led by the sullen Dr. Barry Nyle (Michael Rogers). Dr. Nyle's agenda is the confinement, sedation and treatment of Elena (Eva Allan), an adolescent girl whose condition is never fully explained but whose symptoms include telepathy and telekinesis. Oh, and she wants to leave the institute ASAP because, though Dr. Nyle appears to be a man of science, his intentions are far from pure.

Since that about sums up the plot, perhaps this ambitious debut from writer/director Panos Cosmatos, son of late filmmaker George P. Cosmatos (*Leviathan*, *Tombstone*), isn't for viewers with short attention spans. Those interested in arresting cinematography, however, will find a lot to love. Basically, if the designers of *Star Trek* endeavoured to decorate insane asylums, the result might resemble the set of *BtBR*: glass hallways are lit with coloured bulbs or grainy fluorescents, and the empty cells look like a spaceship bng. There's also a glowing pyramid shrouded in mist, a ritualistic acid trip to Hell and back, and a spindle-limbed monster, which repeatedly foils Elena's escape attempts.



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE TRACKS THE FLESH TRADE

EATING DISORDER



GEORGE: A ZOMBIE INTERVENTION

Breaking Glass

Considering I'm totally addicted to zombie films, I thought it was high time to dive into the delete bin and dig up some gamey fare for your viewing pleasure. First up, a wickedly funny zom-com set in a world where the walking dead abound but are still able to be productive members of society, as long as they can control their appetites. But one, George, can't stop snacking on hookers and Mormons, so his friends try to get him into zombie rehab, via an intervention. A strong ensemble cast gives great performances, bolstered by genre vets such as Lynn Lowry (*Shivers*, *Cat People*) and Brinke Stevens (*The Slumber Party Massacre*), and though it's way zany, there's enough of the red stuff for gorehounds.

BODY COUNT: 25
ZOMBIE COUNT: 11

MEH OF THE DEAD



THE ZOMBIE FARM

Maya Entertainment

Unfortunately, this one isn't about shambling squash, rotting rutabaga or zombified zucchini. Rather, *The Zombie Farm* is a not-so-subtle commentary on current Latino/American relations,as it's set in a city where Mexican immigrants are being kidnapped and turned into mindless farmhands. The zombies are a throwback to the original cinematic undead from movies such as *White Zombie*, which unfortunately means there's more crop-gathering than flesh-eating. In fact, the actors are only identifiable as zombies by their shambling gait and rudimentary makeup, which never quite reaches the neckline. Apparently the entire movie was shot twice – once in English, once in Spanish – and though I only saw the English version, I'm sure that there was nothing lost in translation. *Esto apesta!* (Translation: it sucks!)

BODY COUNT: 19
ZOMBIE COUNT: 22

STALE FROM THE CRYPT



ZOMBIE CHRONICLES

Rezor Digital Entertainment

Last, and most definitely least, is this sick flick called *Zombie Chronicles*, directed by Brad Sykes (*Goth*, *Death Factory*) with cinematography by Jeff Leroy (*Werewolf in a Women's Prison*). Both of 'em have some great movies under their belts, but this isn't one of them. When a hot, young journalist travels to a backwoods town in her quest to compile ghost stories, she stumbles upon an old drunk who tells her a couple of stale tales about a zombie soldier and a zombie cowboy. Said yarns feature a lot of running around in the woods and possibly the lamest sex scene ever filmed. The acting is also mostly incompetent, yet the zombies look amazing thanks to Joe Castro (*Blood Feast 2*). Still, in a genre that depends on headshots to survive, this one's a misfire.

BODY COUNT: 43
ZOMBIE COUNT: 13

LAST CHANCE LANCE



As the visuals are meant to move the story as much as any dialogue, there are a lot of scenes in which the actors don't speak. Nevertheless, Rogers' turn as Dr. Nyle is both entertaining and terrifying. The haunting synth score by Jeremy Schmidt (of psych-rock band Black Mountain) also plays a big role, amplifying the film's strange atmosphere much as composer Henry Purcell did for *A Clockwork Orange*.

So, while some reviews of *BtBR* suggest enjoyment of the movie is contingent upon wacky tobacky, Cosmatos definitely isn't green. Mainstream audience members may leave scratching their heads but it's sure to please fans of slow-moving, art house horrors such as *The Shining*, *Eraserhead* or *Pi*.

MOANER T. LAWRENCE

A LIGHTER SHADE OF GREY MEAT

A LITTLE BIT ZOMBIE

Starring Kristopher Turner, Stephen McHattie and Crystal Lowe
Directed by Casey Walker
Written by Trevor Martin and Christopher Bond
Cave Painting Pictures



It's no secret to readers of these pages that zombie films have been done to death. Zombie comedies, somewhat less. Rom-zom-coms, even less frequently – but like the outbreaks depicted in the films, even that sub-subgenre is becoming commonplace since *Shaun of the Dead*. The latest attempt at playing deadheads for laughs is *A Little Bit Zombie*, the debut feature from Casey Walker.

Deep within a forested area, zombie hunters Max (Stephen McHattie) and Penelope (Emilie Ullerup) have just disposed of another horde of undead brain-chewers, thanks to a recent outbreak. Unbeknownst to them, a mosquito carrying the infection has flown off to a nearby cabin, the very same one where our hero Steve (Kristopher Turner) is headed with his demanding fiancée, sister and best friend. Of course, Steve gets bit by the zombie DNA-carrying bug, and slowly begins to detenorate into a "missing link." But he hasn't turned into a full-blown mindless chomper – yet. Soon he is only able to think about that precious grey matter, even fantasizing about sucking it out of his sickening girlfriend's head through a straw. Like an addict, Steve hides his cravings, but the pull eventually becomes too strong. At first, his pet rabbit's fluffy head suffices, but it isn't long before he's discovered and his friends are reluctantly convinced to take him to a meat shop, where a deli tray of assorted animal brains await. Like an episode of TV's *Intervention*, the group pulls together to help Steve with his addiction, driving home the moral that even those with designs on your brain ought to be loved. Unfortunately while zombie hunter Penelope thinks things could be learned from Steve, Max has no sentiments for even the most gentle and domesticated ghoul.

In the world of zombie movies, *A Little Bit Zombie* isn't the juiciest, but it is nicely seasoned with a few laughs, some addiction commentary and above-average gore effects. *Shaun* or *Fido* this isn't, but is it an exceptional debut feature? A little bit.

RYAN DYER



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REISSUES



CREEPSHOW OR CRAPSHOW?

CHILLERS (1987) DVD

Starring Jesse Emery, Marjorie Fitzsimmons and Laurie Pennington
Written and directed by Daniel Boyd
Troma

Pulling off a successful anthology feature can be tricky. From genre high points such as Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath* (1963) to head scratch-inducing failures such as *Trapped Ashes* (2006), these collections of shorts can soar or suffer at the hands of their individual tales. Considering that the finest examples more often than not come courtesy of established directors, first-timer Daniel Boyd's 1987 direct-to-video effort *Chillers* never really stood a chance. It is, however, not the worst of the bunch either.



In an average bus station, five stranded strangers take turns describing the scary dreams they had the night before. In the first story, a swimmer with a fear of heights falls in love with a hunky high diver, who teaches her a few things about confidence, love and how best to rock a bikini after death. Up next, a young boy describes his dream of a camping trip interrupted by a gun-toting hillbilly and a force for which no one is prepared. The third tale is of an obsessed fan, her anchorman love interest and their one night stand that goes way too far. The film's fourth (and least successful) entry sees a young Wendy's employee gain the power to bring the dead back to life – with idiotic results. And finally, a college anthropology professor accidentally revives the spirit of an ancient Aztec goddess, who wreaks havoc during one of his boring lectures. When all have delivered their part, the bus arrives to take them to their presumably final destination. Here's a hint: it's south. Very south.

While the film is easy enough to get through, *Chillers* does not only suffer from the lack of a marquee director. Despite some choice titles, 1987 was hardly a banner year for horror. The direct-to-video market was booming, but the genre itself was headed into a particularly weak phase. The bare walls of the following decade bear the results of the trends (poor humour and that damned blue backlight that still makes cameos in dream sequences and similar otherworldly settings). *Chillers* is dated and forgettable, more *Crapshow* than *Creepshow*, but you could do worse.

TAL ZIMERMAN

THE LITTLE SPERMAID

GUMS (1976) DVD

Starring Paul Styles, Brother Theodore and Terri Hall
Directed by Robert J. Kaplan
Written by Sam Cohen, Paul E. Cohen and Robert J. Kaplan
Sinful Mermaid

I make it no secret that I love both porn and parody, but porn parodies – *Edward Penishands, It's a Wonderful Sex Life, Paranormal Cracktivity* ("They're possessed... by anal cravings!"), etc. – are pretty much a guaranteed snooze for me. Accuse me of having unrealistic expectations, but when every joke falls flat and every sex scene is undermined by said flat jokes, well, just turn the goddamn thing off and leave me to the ladies' underwear section of the Sears catalogue.

Sadly, that's not even where the caveats end for the feeble-ass *Jaws* satire *Gums* (1976), in which a nymphomaniac mermaid terrorizes a beach town by giving male swimmers fatally intense underwater blowjobs. (And yes, at one point she also proves her pussy-eating skills are equally lethal.) The jokes are terrible even by porn parody standards, the optical effects make most Troma films look like a George Lucas highlight reel and the picture quality is so washed out you can barely distinguish T from A.



Oh, and then there's just one more piddling matter, Gentle Reader – this is the CENSORED version. That's right, the distributor couldn't be bothered to put out the original hardcore film, so instead we're treated to truncated fuck scenes with little cartoon drawings and unfunny captions stuck over anything that involves the touching of wobbly dangly bits, because God knows, nobody interested in a film like this wants to see anything penetrated.

Is there one single selling point to be had here? Well, there's cult comedian and one-time David Letterman regular Brother Theodore, although he has to spout dialogue from the same shitty script as everyone else, so that's not exactly a recommendation. Don't buy it. Don't rent it. Don't bother with a bigger boat.

JOHN W. BOWEN

LUCHADORKY

MST3K: SAMSON VS. THE VAMPIRE WOMEN (1962) DVD

Starring Mike Nelson, Trace Beaulieu and Kevin Murphy
Directed by Jim Mallon
Written by Mike Nelson, Trace Beaulieu and Kevin Murphy
Shout! Factory

El Santo – a legend in the wrestling ring, and an even better guy to have on your side in case of an

invasion by vampires, aliens, witches or mummies. The sole horror title in Shout! Factory's 24th *MST3K* collection – which also includes *The Sword and the Dragon* and two *Alien Fugitive* films – *Samson vs. The Vampire Women* (1962) is a fine piece of trash film-making ripe for the sardonic riffs of the *MST3K* crew.

Featuring the same multi-generational curses, cob-web-filled crypts and rubber bats that typified most Mexican horror films of the 1960s, *Samson vs. The Vampire Women* is another conventional entry of the era that mixes campy spookshow atmosphere with acrobatic wrestling thrills. In this one, a group of female vamps rise from their dusty coffins to fulfill an ancient prophecy. Crusty-faced queen Thorina (Lorena Velazquez) gets a beauty makeover and kidnaps her chosen bloodsucking successor, Diana (Maria Duval). But not only is Diana's dad, Professor Orlof (Augusto Benedico), aware of the curse, he's also pals with the silver-masked El Santo (Rodolfo Guzman Huerta), who springs into action to thwart Thorina and her crew of ring-savvy undead lugs.



Even though Santo (or Samson, if you prefer) doesn't make his glorious entrance until almost 30 minutes into the movie, this remains one of his better early efforts, with the filmmakers putting the final tweaks on the formula that continued to shape the Mexican wrestling film genre for the next several decades. But it's still often plodding, making it perfect for viewing through Mike and the 'bots' wryly insightful lens. Tom Servo, for example, doesn't really have a problem with vampire women. "She comes, sucks on your neck, you live for all eternity, she's super hot – what's the problem?" And while Crow grapples with the physics of the hovering bats outside Diana's window, Mike marvels that "the devil's minions are just cheap thugs."

This farewell episode for *MST3K* writer/star TV's Frank (Frank Conniff) is a memorable one, a throwback to Conniff's own selections such as *The Beast of Yucca Flats* and the *Gamera* movies that really helped define the tone of the series. If, as Crow observes, the battle of good versus evil is actually really goofy, then this film may just be the biggest – and most fun – brawl yet.

PAUL CORUPE

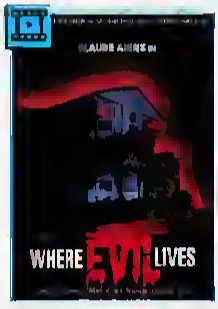

Where Evil Lives: In a house full of no-names.

FROM THE GUARDIANS OF AS-IS

WHERE EVIL LIVES (1989) DVD

Starring Claude Akins, James Coffey and Larry Quadagno
Written and directed by Richard L. Fox, Stephen A. Maier and Kevin G. Nunan
Troma

According to the DVD cover of *Where Evil Lives*, this low-budget anthology is one of the greatest horror films of the '80s. This is a lie, of course, but I will concede that it's so inept and bizarre, it has to be recommended for lovers of oddball cinema.



Comprised of three stories written and directed by three different no-names (though Richard L. Fox has since served as an assistant director on big movies such as *The Expendables*), *Where Evil Lives* is framed by a narrative involving a caretaker of a huge estate who tells a prospective buyer spooky stories about the various horrors that have taken place there. The first sees a spree killer returning from prison to confront the ghosts of his past; in the second, a teenage boy fights being seduced by a vampire, while aided by his clairvoyant sister; and in the third, a witch is recruited by the police to take down a mad doctor who has hired a killer to supply him with fresh organs.

The most noticeable thing about this movie is just how poverty row it is. The sound mix is completely screwed, with background music that often drowns out dialogue, the makeup effects are terrible and the acting is frequently hilariously awful. Like many movies of the era, it's full of sex and scantily clad females, but they're not exactly *Playboy* centerfolds. For those exact reasons, though, *Where Evil Lives* provides a certain kind of entertainment, even if that means laughing at the melodramatic over-acting and dime-store vampire fangs. At the same time, the movie also occasionally benefits from its limitations. In the first installment, when the killer is being pursued by the zombified ghosts of his past victims, the visuals achieve the kind of accidental surrealism normally produce by Jean Rollin.

It's great that Troma has rescued *Where Evil Lives* from the delete bin but it would've been nice if they'd have actually cleaned it up. Granted, the original print probably wasn't being preserved in a climate-controlled vault somewhere, but this DVD is just as bad as an old VHS tape. There are no extras worth mentioning, yet even that lack of substance just adds to the mystery of this trashy '80s curiosity.

AARON VON LUPTON





THE

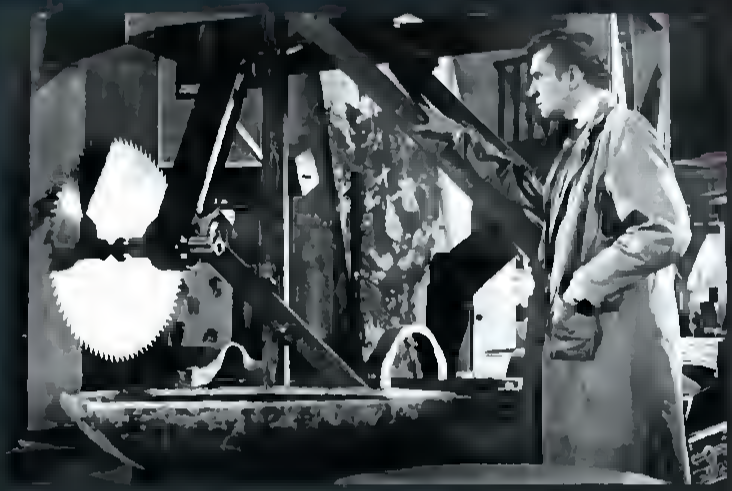
LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: Smoke and Mirrors

by Paul Corupe

A parade of alien invaders, giant monsters and vicious implements of death tromped across the screen in the 1950s, marking an important sea change as genre film production kicked into high gear for one of its most prolific periods. As the 1956 sci-fi classic *Forbidden Planet* demonstrated, the indistinct, invisible horrors of the last decade were emerging from the dark corners of the id to be forged in flesh – the mere suggestion of phantoms or ghouls and spiralling montages of homicidal breakdowns gave way to severed body parts and easily observable threats from beyond the stars.

Few were probably as keenly aware of this cultural shift as director John Brahm. His Vincent Price thriller *The Mad Magician* (1954) – newly released as part of Sony's MOD DVD line – was Columbia Pictures' barely disguised *House of Wax* (1953) copycat. Sharing a star and a screenwriter, this similarly tongue-in-cheek 3-D period piece also features a tragic showman who misuses the tools of his trade to kill those that wronged him, until he's brought down in a fiery climax.



Price is typically riveting as Gallico the Great, a designer and engineer who creates elaborate magic trick equipment. Tired of working behind the scenes, Gallico decides to become a professional magician, but his debut is cancelled mid-performance when his employer, Ormond (Donald Randolph), lays legal claim to a buzz saw illusion designed while Gallico was working for him. Having already lost his wife to Ormond, Gallico grants a private performance of the buzz saw gag once more, only with his boss on the wrong end of the deadly blade. A skilled impressionist, Gallico then disguises himself as Ormond to conceal his crime, but is soon forced to kill again, piquing the suspicions of his former assistant Karen (Mary Murphy) and her police detective beau (Patrick O'Neal).



It would be easy to dismiss *The Mad Magician* as a contrived *House of Wax* copy, but it does manage to pull a few unique, sardonic horror thrills out of its hat. Ormond's beheading, with a demonic-looking Gallico laughing madly in the background, turns into a dark comic farce when Karen mistakenly takes the bag holding the severed head out for a night on the town. Later, a crematorium escape trick provides an inferno of fun as Gallico dispatches a rival magician who had been siphoning away his best illusions.

Despite these heady thrills, Brahm is noticeably off his game, struggling to adapt his directorial style to a new breed of horror film. The shadowy subtlety that he employed for earlier efforts such as *The Lodger* (1944) and *Hangover Square* (1945) makes a noticeable disappearing act here. In *The Mad Magician*, emotional crises always take a back seat to the cold methodology of murder, such as when Gallico, in his Ormond getup, unceremoniously dumps his victim's disguised, headless body amongst a towering pile of burning effigies at a college football pep rally. An almost-identical scene appears in *Hangover Square*, as Laird Cregar's psychopathic composer George Bone disposes of a victim in a Guy Fawkes' Day celebratory bonfire. But *Hangover Square*'s version focuses almost entirely on Bones' anxious reaction to the Fawkes mask on the face of the corpse slipping and his guilt-ridden stare into the flames. By contrast, Gallico's methodical ladder climb to the top of the pyre features only one slight glimpse of the magician's expressionless face. There's no pretense of illusion or emotional dread here, just the grotesquery of death laid bare. It's only when Karen spots Gallico in the crowd that he reacts, nervous that she will see through his disguise – a trick to which the audience already knows the secret – he slips away.

And that evolution from the swirling shadows of psychological horror to the straightforward, ghoulish thrills of decapitations and incineration is really what drives this early Price classic. Though Brahm's 1940s films used little more than suggestion and misdirection to cast a spell of fear, filmmakers were increasingly willing to pull back the curtains to expose the sturdy inner workings of the machinery of horror – fears not born from our unconsciousness but from our everyday lives. Although *The Mad Magician* noticeably grapples with this shift, it ultimately accepts that sometimes it's okay for magicians to reveal how they did it.

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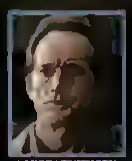
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IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

R DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND DTHER SINS

O Kapitan! Mein Kapitan!

by John W. Bowen



"Where do you plan to sail her?"

"Into eternity, Marshall. Eternity."

Well, I guess that's fair enough, although *Death Ship* didn't exactly sail into immortality. Instead, this quaint curiosity from the VHS era spent most of the last 32 years adrift in the outer reaches of horror fandom's collective consciousness (Or, as a Scottish stripper I once knew used to say, 'Floating about aimlessly like an unflushed poo.") It's only ever had a DVD release in the UK and Korea, and, naturally, VHS copies on this side of the pond are in dwindling supply, although as of this writing it can be seen on that video upload site that rhymes with "stewed boob."

Granted, *Death Ship* won't meet most fans' criteria for a bona fide classic but there's a good deal to recommend here if you look for some of the same things I regularly find myself drawn to. Want '70s B-movie and network TV royalty? How about George Kennedy, Richard Crenna, Nick Mancuso, Sally Ann Howes and Kate Reid? And who could resist that poster/box cover art? Just take a look at that bad bitch and tell me you could have walked away from any '80s video store without renting it. Want a substantial plot that makes sense? Look elsewhere – this one appears to have been counting calories.



The morning after a mysterious late-night collision sinks an American cruise ship, a small group of survivors – including the ship's captain, Ashland (Kennedy) and first officer Marshall (Crenna), who just happens to have brought his family along – drifts into the path of an old, decrepit-looking mid-size freighter. After a few misadventures, they manage to get on board, only the find it deserted. Well, at least devoid of any crew, but the old tub proves to be very much alive. Blissfully unaware (read: too fucking dumb to realize) that this is the boat that rammed them the night before, our castaways are soon set upon by the ship itself, as various implements spring to life and "accidentally" start wasting folks left and right. After Canadian character actor Saul Rubinek comes to a deliciously nasty end at the wrong end of an ill-tempered winch, Marshall's wife (Howes) ventures the opinion that "this old ship seems to have a life of its own," and the sub-*Omen* deaths keep coming, although at a pace too leisurely for many tastes.

Meanwhile, the injured Ashland begins hearing orders in German, and before you know it, he's healed up, hosed off and taken to swaggering about the decks in a pristine World War II-era German naval uniform. This new gig seems to suit him well, as we learn he was about to lose his command on the cruise ship because of his poor people skills, a job requirement that was apparently of secondary importance to the Third Reich. The others begin to speculate about the miraculously recovered captain's increasingly bizarre behaviour, though none seem interested in where he got the uniform. A gramophone that alternates between playing big band jazz and the Nazi anthem 'Horst Wessel Song" provides yet another clue, as does the eventual discovery of a perfectly preserved roomful of Nazi memorabilia.

But the big reveal comes in the chart room, where Marshall discovers that the ship's original course was simply to steam around in circles in the Atlantic, this, apparently, was a designated "interrogation ship" where prisoners were tortured for information. Granted, the idea of a floating Guantanamo Bay might actually make sense in the current era, but given that the Atlantic was positively teeming with attack subs both Allied and Nazi during the war, it all seems a damn sight less practical, hmm? No matter – by this time, shower stalls are raining blood, rooms full of rotting corpses are discovered and Ashland is pitching in by running around with a rifle, blasting away at all non-Wehrmacht personnel.

Silly? *Scheisse*, yeah, but it's more than just the B-movie tropes that endear this Canadian/British production to my horrid heart. Between *Alien*, *The Shining*, *The Thing*, *Prison*, *The Bunker* and a few others, I've always had an infatuation with monster invasions and hauntings that unfold in unconventional settings, and that's the main reason why *Death Ship* manages to float my boat despite so many holes in its creaky hull. Now get the hell out of my basement before you wind up dead in the water.


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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

Oscar Wilde's seminal 1890 work *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has the distinction of being his only novel, as well as one of his only works to contain strong horror overtones. For the three of you not familiar with the story, Dorian Grey is a young Victorian gentleman who embarks upon a long, lustful life of debauchery with each new sin taking its toll on his portrait rather than on the eternally young man himself. Eventually, however, Dorian's past catches up to him.

With its Faustian themes and ahead-of-its-time homoerotic subtext, it's a work that continues to impress and influence many modern authors. The latest to be swayed by its spell are comic writers Darren G. Davis and Scott Davis, who have taken a unique viewpoint on the old story in their new *Dorian Gray* series (now available from Bluewater Comics).

"Darren was looking for some fresh fiction ideas and had recently finished reading *Dorian Gray*," explains Scott Davis. "He found some themes that were very interesting to him and he asked me to round out a story that uses the book as background, but not be a direct sequel. In his mind, he wanted elements of the supernatural without sacrificing the book's key [ingredients] of the dark side of vanity and the masks we wear that hide our true desires."



The comic takes place in modern times with a new Dorian – a direct descendent of the original – living it up in New York City. A relatively normal teenager, albeit one with plenty of money and privilege, Dorian's life is forever changed when he receives a mysterious parcel from London. Soon, he comes face to face with his ancestor's famous portrait, its past sins horrifically still intact.

Not wanting to merely retell the original tale, Davis set out to create a new mythology for Dorian and his family that goes beyond the idea of a haunted painting.

"The Grays are a cursed family," says Davis. "And so are many of the other wealthy families that can trace their roots back to 19th-century New York. These families are plagued by house demons called the Morbi, who provide access to their deepest and darkest desires only to use those longings to destroy them and future generations of their family."

Upon learning of his heritage, young Dorian is determined to destroy the Morbi and break the curse, although it remains to be seen if a spoiled rich kid is up to the task. Dorian's growing maturity and new responsibilities are key themes of the book, but Davis also touches on many of the original work's ideas.

"Back in the 19th century, Wilde cleverly created a unique way of wrapping his very progressive views in a horrific manner. What everyone remembers from the book is, of course, how the painting degrades over time and becomes more and more horrific as Dorian indulges and eventually loses himself. The painting itself embodies the horror while Dorian gets to wear the mask of polite society. This juxtaposition is the anchor in which our take on the story lives, and it is this true-life horror that is embodied in the demons that plague our characters."

Since art played a crucial role in the source material, it is only fitting that the choice of artist for the series was of utmost importance for the writers.

"Darren and I both agreed Federico De Luca had the gothic sensibility and the heavy brush stroke to bring Dorian to life," says Davis. "When I saw a few character sketches, I could see that he could convey the horror in a dense, claustrophobic way. Most of the action that happens in the present is done using these dark, lush tones, but there is a definite counterpoint with the sepia-toned flashback pages that allow us to visually tell a back story."



***Dorian Gray*: A new deteriorating face of debauchery**

Since the original novel is considered a classic work of literature, Davis hopes readers can judge the comic on its own merits. He asserts that it's not really even meant to be compared to it, but rather a homage for modern times.

"I would never be so bold as to place my skills or my storytelling next to someone like Oscar Wilde,' he attests. "What Wilde did is allow me to play in his sandbox. He created a universe and a set of circumstances that I simply hijacked to tell my own version of the story."

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTEN @PCABEZUELO

QUICK CUTS

REVIEWS BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

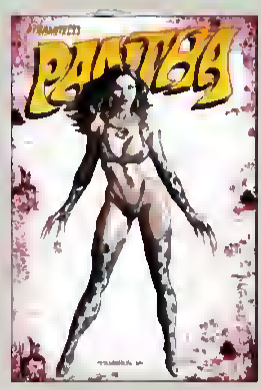


To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the original Topps trading cards, IDW is launching a new *Mars Attacks* comic (see *RM#124*), undoubtedly hoping that there are more people who remember the awesome cards than the less-than-awesome Tim Burton film. This issue kicks off the series on a strong note, with a flashback to 1962 and the capture of a martian by a couple of rednecks who promptly sell it to a shady carnival. The martian's friends come to the rescue and soon ray guns and shotguns are blasting away with equal measure. It's a nice prelude and set-up to the upcoming Earth invasion, with some great art by John McCrea who is clearly relishing the opportunity to draw the iconic aliens. Looking forward to the incoming carnage.

Imagine Batman and the Joker teaming up to save what's left of a post-apocalyptic world, and you're primed for *Extermination*. In place of the caped crusader and his arch-enemy, however, are Nox and the Red Reaper. Mortal enemies, the two must shelf their differences if they're to survive a poisonous landscape filled with murderous telepathic alien creatures. While the two taunt one another and point out each other's shortcomings, we get brief glimpses of life pre-destruction, although writer Simon Spurrier wisely withholds revealing who the aliens are and what led to their takeover. It's a strong idea foiled by the fact that Nox and the Reaper simply aren't that interesting. Their constant bickering and posturing, while believable, grows tedious and tiresome, and Edwards' art and character design fail to liven things up. This series may find its feet in an issue or two, but for now it's less than inspired.



I'm not a prude, but I felt somewhat embarrassed picking up a copy of *Pantha*, the story of a reincarnated Egyptian cat goddess who prances around in a thong and does battle with a similarly dressed opponent named Mamba. It's not that I have a problem with nearly naked women, but there needs to be a strong story behind that flesh or else the entire endeavour feels exploitative. To be fair, I sincerely believe writer Brandon Jerwa is attempting to craft a compelling narrative filled with mystery and mysticism, and there are a couple of good action sequences, including one with a giant face-chomping snake. But the elements don't really come together, and when you strip away the gore and violence, you're really only left with a cat woman in a thong.



***Grim Leaper* has** a fantastic premise: for reasons unknown, Lou is doomed to die violently over and over. Upon death, he's sucked into a new, pre-existing body and barely has time to come to terms with his new identity before he's killed again. One day he meets Ella, a fellow leaper, and the two form a close bond before Ella is killed. Now smitten, Lou is determined to find her new identity. This second issue adds a few wrinkles, including a wife for Lou's new persona and the possibility that Ella may be somewhat off her rocker. It's a great concept that Kurtis J. Wiebe has a lot of fun with, playing up the more wacky aspects of the story without ever resorting to parody, and Alfredo C. Santos' art is appropriately bizarre and macabre, lingering on the quite graphic (and inventive) death scenes. Love has never hurt so good.



This hardcover edition beautifully reprints all seven issues of *Severed*, the story of twelve-year-old Jack Garron, who searches for his father in 1916 America. Along the way he meets the mysterious Salesman, a man with razor-sharp teeth and a ravenous appetite for human flesh. He worms his way into Jack's life, stringing the boy along to his ultimate fate. This is a tense and gripping story that takes full advantage of the period setting to create a moody and unsettling atmosphere. Attila Futaki's art adds to the tone, especially in the quieter moments, although the action sequences can be somewhat confusing. Luckily *Severed* concentrates on building the scares, but does so with excellent set pieces and great interaction between the characters. After six issues of set-up, though, the end inevitably feels a bit rushed and somewhat unsatisfying. Still, the ride itself is excellent.



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PROMETHEUS: THE ART OF THE FILM

Merk Sellsbury
Titan Books

Regardless of whether you loved or hated *Prometheus* (see p.36), most of us agree that it looks pretty fucking sweet. Now, UK-based publisher Titan Books gives fans the opportunity to delve deeper into the process that went into creating the visual elements for the film via a glossy, full-colour, oversized, 192-page coffee-table book.

Things kick off with a brief introduction from director Ridley Scott on the "art of film," then we're into the meat of it. Set photos, concept drawings and storyboards are definitely the order of the day here, as the text is relatively sparse and limited to what is necessary to accompany the visuals. We begin with a look at the director's long-awaited return to the *Alien* franchise and the unanswered question that led him there. ("I was curious that nobody had ever asked, 'Who was the big guy sitting in the seat?'" says Scott of the original film.) He goes on to explain how that question became the basis for *Prometheus*' plot and why he chose not to return to the xenomorphs of the other *Alien* films for this prequel ("I think in four films, honestly, the good old Alien has worn out. He's no longer frightening.") This leads into a chapter about designing *Prometheus*, featuring an extended interview with frequent Scott collaborator and production designer Arthur Max, who pops up in several other sections of the book, as well. Max is quick to share exactly what real-world influences he cribbed from for the alien planet and technology. Hint: everything from classical art and ancient human languages to strange forms of marine and prehistoric life.

The remainder of the book is a chronological investigation of the film from start to finish. We learn about the challenges of building ships for a prequel shot decades after the original – which must recall a familiar look but also work for modern audiences; how much of what ended up on-screen was actually accomplished with elaborate sets and old-school practical effects; and exactly how the various creatures and massive structures of the alien world were honed and developed.

All in all, it's a rock-solid offering, but caveat emptor: if you believed *Prometheus* was a bit light in the story department and are hoping that this book will flesh things out for you, prepare to be disappointed. Like the film itself, the emphasis here is on the visual style, but dammit if it doesn't have scads of it.

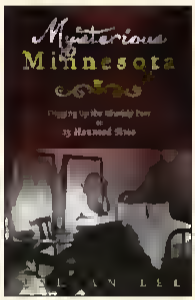
MONICA S. KUEBLER

MYSTERIOUS MINNESOTA: DIGGING UP THE GHOSTLY PAST AT 13 HAUNTED SITES

Adrian Lee
Llewellyn

Frontier-era saloons, 19th-century hotels and speakeasies under prohibition are among the locations covered by local history enthusiast Adrian Lee in *Mysterious Minnesota*, and he starts out well enough. His accounts of the ghosts that have been reported in the locations that he covers – a cranky spectral projectionist in the Mounds Theatre, St. Paul; the phantom actress, Ellen, in the Opera House in Mantorville; a murdered gangster in the Wabasha Street caves – are intriguing. Where this book, like so many other non-fiction paranormal tomes, falls short is in balancing the narratives and anecdotes with the "science" of the investigative process.

Firstly, the reports of unnerving voices being detected on digital recorders are less convincing in print than they are when presented in a medium (such as TV) where the audience has the opportunity to decide for itself whether a wobble in the static is a voice from beyond or a car going past outside. Secondly, proving paranormal phenomena scientifically demands more rigour than merely mentioning that one of the psychics on your team had a bad feeling about the basement. And thirdly, beginning a paragraph with "it is possible that paranormal activity can trigger changes in atmospheric pressure," and following it up with a couple of pages of speculation on how supernatural entities may be more active under certain conditions, is pretty much meaningless if you don't even bother measuring the damn air pressure at the site of a haunting to see if it changes or not. This is not "science." This is "making things up."



It's a shame, because many of the phenomena that Lee recounts as experienced by his team are indeed pretty creepy, but his attempts to convince skeptics that his investigators approach the task of tracking paranormal activity purely scientifically lead to leaden prose and unconvincing results. Of course, there's nothing wrong with recounting a good, old-fashioned ghost tale anecdotally – especially to the already-converted – but things can get dodgy when attempting to turn it into fact.

THE GRIM READER

CAROLINE MUNRO, FIRST LADY OF FANTASY

Robert Michael "Bobb" Cotter
McFarland



From her uncredited role in *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* to recent turns in indies such as *The Absence of Light*, the titular bombshell's lengthy career in and out of the genre is catalogued here, including cast and crew credits, synopses, balanced reviews (highlighting Munro's performances, natch) and insightful notes for each film. Not definitive but sure to complement the autobiography she announces in her brief foreword.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

ANNO DRACULA: THE BLOODY RED BARON

Kim Newman
Titan Books



If you're a fan of Kim Newman's alternate history tales, you'll want to snag this reissue (book two in the *Anno Dracula* cycle), which puts Count Dracula and other fictional characters in the middle of a WWI narrative. Stocked with plenty of extras, including the novella *Vampire Romance*, an outline for the film version of the book, and some flashy new artwork and author notes, this is a deluxe edition you can really sink your fangs into.

JESSA SOBCZUK

THE LIGHT IS THE DARKNESS

Laird Barron
Infernal House



A modern gladiator looks for his missing sister and becomes entangled in a web of mad scientists, rich sadists, ancient conspiracies, pre-human entities and cosmic horror. This novella has more action, body horror and adventure than Barron's last book, *The Croning* (see *RM#124*), resulting in a very witty, sneppy Lovecraftian horror that almost reads as if it was written by Roger Zelazny. Another winner!

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

This book will certainly be of interest to any amateur ghost hunters planning a trip to Minnesota, but, unfortunately, the most terrifying thing about it is the crappy "science" it espouses.

JUSTINE WARWICK

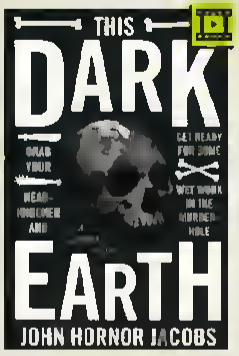
THIS DARK EARTH

John Hornor Jacobs

Gallery Books

If you're a fan of apocalypse stories then you'll certainly be familiar with the radioactive ground covered in John Hornor Jacobs' new novel *This Dark Earth*.

The first half of the book plays out just as any other zombie tale would. There's a mysterious viral outbreak and our two heroes, Lucy and Knock-Out, must try to survive the army, nuclear radiation and the legions of the walking dead, all while attempting to reunite with Lucy's husband and ten-year-old son Gus. Then Jacobs jumps us a few years into the future, where Knock-Out, Lucy and a now fourteen-year-old Gus have established a fortified settlement on a bridge along with several other survivors. From there, the story is relayed by the various citizens of Bridge City – each chapter switching to a fresh perspective and point of view as new events unfold. All the while, the survivors continue to go through the daily routine of gathering supplies and fending off the relentless hordes of the undead, at least until word reaches them that an army of slavers (prisoner-taking bandits), led by a man named Konstantin, is planning on taking over their settlement.



While *This Dark Earth* reads like a mash-up of *Mad Max* and the *Fallout* series of video games (especially once the various wasteland stereotypes are introduced), that doesn't make it a bad book. In fact, it's better than most of its ilk. The storyline might seem familiar, but the believable and engaging characters help keep the reader invested. Additionally, it tries just hard enough to be different that you'll be compelled to stick around until the very end. And while that ending won't be a surprise to anyone, since pretty much every single possibility of humanity's demise has been explored and extrapolated across multiple media over the years – *Is it possible to be bored of a future that hasn't even happened?* I wonder – *This Dark Earth* proves there's still some life in this wasteland of a genre yet.

MIKE BEARDSALL

ZOMBIE BAKE-OFF

Stephen Grehem Jones

Lazy Fascist Press

Mixing doughnuts and the walking dead proves to be a deadly combination in Stephen Graham Jones' latest novel, *Zombie Bake-Off*, a slim volume of experimental fiction that wastes no time or word count on superfluous detail or arbitrary introspective riff-raff. Jones constructs a bare-bones horror tale by combining clever, offbeat humour with a familiar, yet unpredictable plot.

The story begins with a group of teenagers joyriding in a doughnut truck who hit a pedestrian and attempt to throw the body into the back of the van to hide the evidence. As the teens try to figure out what to do next, the corpse vanishes without a trace – almost. There is a maggoty finger left behind in a pastry delivery box, which just happens to be en route to an upcoming bake-off at the local convention centre, where it will contaminate everyone and turn them into flesh-hungry zombies.



Dialogue heavy, *Zombie Bake-Off* reads more like a script than a proper novel, and Jones' decision to write in the present tense makes for a unique and absorbing narrative feel. Populated by a mixed bag of conventioneers (Events Coordinator Terry, PR man Johnny T, a team of wrestlers and a slew of bake-ready soccer moms) and plenty of blood and gory action as they're systematically dismembered or otherwise zombified, this novel seems to assume you already know the drill and lets you get straight to the flesh-eating. Much of the visual landscape is left to your own construction (perhaps because it's safe to assume that if you are reading this book, you know what the inside of a convention centre looks like), and while many would argue that this is way too skeletal to pass muster, *Zombie Bake-Off* is still an exciting read with a fresh, no-drama take on an undead apocalypse scenario.

Now, pass me a crullier.

JESSA SOBCZUK

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

MONSTERS ABROAD

Just as movie buffs have their rituals for unearthing cinematic treasures, I have mine for finding genre books. When I'm travelling, bookstores are a must-stop, as no trip is complete without acquiring some regional horror fare. However, when I recently spent a week in New Zealand, I initially found myself stymied. After hitting three bookstores with no luck, I started to wonder if anyone in the country actually wrote genre stories.

I'd all but given up when I stumbled across a bookseller at the airport with a "local authors" shelf, and lo and behold, there were a couple of titles that fit the profile. Left to choose between a serial killer story and a vampire series (because books are twice as pricey there), I went for the latter, preferring fictional monsters to human ones. It was a 2009 novel by prolific New Zealand-based author Nalini Singh called *Angels' Blood* (published by Gollancz), which has since spawned a number of also widely available sequels.

The book (the first in the *Guild Hunter* series) is admittedly not straight-up horror, though like many vampire novels its lineage can be traced back to Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* – only more sexual, more violent and much more gory. It lies at that now-popular intersection where urban fantasy meets horror meets erotica, and will definitely appeal to fans of TV's *True Blood*. What's most interesting about it, though, is how Singh has rewritten the bloodsucker mythos. In *Angels' Blood*, vampires are created by angels – not the holy sort, but rather the badass, cruel and intimidating kind – and are bound in servitude to them. Main character Elena is a hunter, born with the unique ability to track rogue vamps. Her talents are put to the ultimate test when she's hired by the Archangel of New York to find another archangel who's started consuming blood and has embarked upon a gruesome murder spree, leaving piles of dismembered human corpses in his wake.



In creating a world where the immortals live in close proximity but still apart from humans, Singh capitalizes on both their otherworldliness and the brutal power struggles that take place when one lives for millennia. As a result, even the romance here is dangerous, and occasionally uncomfortable, which is a welcome change from some of the whining, pining supernatural creatures of late. And definitely more adult.

That said, if this is "paranormal romance" (as it's been labelled in some territories) then it's definitely the most visceral, grisly paranormal romance I've ever read (erotica for the horror set, maybe?). So don't let that marketing term dissuade you. There's plenty of graphic sex, sure, but there's also blood – lots and lots of blood.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



ROLE REVERSAL IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY IN **CHELSEA CAIN**'S CRIME SERIES ABOUT AN EXTREMELY FATAL FEMME FATALE

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

BY MELISSA COCETTA

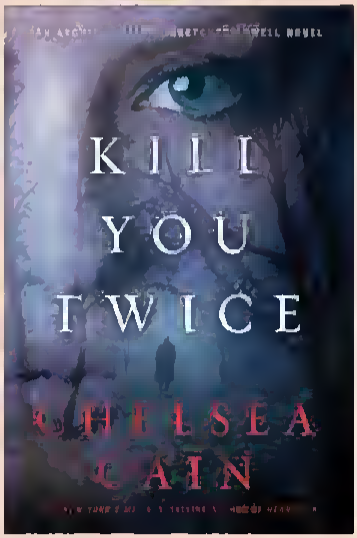
THINK SERIAL KILLERS, AND A CERTAIN STEREOTYPE PROBABLY SPRINGS TO MIND: WHITE, MALE, LONER, PERHAPS ATTRACTIVE, BUT NOT SO MUCH THAT HE'D STAND OUT. But that's real life. For her fiction, author Chelsea Cain turns all this conventional profiling on its head by casting the gorgeous Gretchen Lowell as her gregarious mass murderer.

The series, which began with *Heartsick* in 2007, concerns Gretchen's cat-and-mouse games with homicide detective Archie Sheridan, and has previously spawned three sequels (*Sweetheart*, 2008; *Evil At Heart*, 2009, *The Night Season*, 2011). Each book centres around a different case that Archie must solve – usually while Gretchen leads him closer to the answers via her coy manipulations (though she is absent from *The Night Season*, in which Cain focused on Archie).

But now Portland, Oregon's stunning serial killer is back for fifth installment *Kill You Twice* (out August 7 from Minotaur Books), a narrative that examines even more of what makes her tick.

"Everyone is always asking for more information about Gretchen," says Cain, "and I am determined not to give away everything. That being said, I have offered readers a few glimpses into her younger years."

On top of Gretchen's return, fans of the series will be treated to a much more grisly tale. In this fourth sequel, a man is found skinned, gagged and hanging by his wrist from a tree in a public park. Archie is put on the case, but this time he can't avoid Gretchen's games – especially after she gets news to him, from inside a psych ward, that she has intimate knowledge about the case.



While this book may be more gruesome then the last, the entire series is a dramatic departure from what Cain originally began writing. After launching a career as a reporter, she quickly found that having to talk to strangers wasn't for her. This led her to start writing humour and parody books.

"I was still trying to figure out how to write fiction, and a parody seemed like a novel with training wheels," she explains, "because you have the characters, you have the tone, you have a lot of the language – you just have to put it together."

It wasn't until she got pregnant and her hormones made her "crazy" that she realized her passion lay with stories about graphic carnage and serial killers.

"I developed a real bloodlust," she admits. "I've always loved mysteries and cop shows and detective stories, but I became positively hungry for gore. I wrote *Heartsick* in that hormonal fog."

In that book, Cain describes Gretchen's heinous torture of Archie in graphic detail. The reader is with him as she carves a heart into his chest – as is her trademark – breaks his ribs with a hammer and nail, and feeds him bleach by the spoonful, day after day.

Even though those raging pregnancy hormones have subsided, Cain's literary craving for blood has remained, allowing her to continue coming up with interesting kills. And, unlike many authors, she never worries about going too far with the violence.

"I don't think I've ever edited gore out of a scene," Cain says. "Those are the fun bits – the parts that make your stomach clench. And I enjoy the challenge of coming up with descriptions for, say, a severed nose on a carpet. I do want to be dangerous in the sense that I want to push boundaries. I want readers to shake their heads and say, 'Did she really just go there?'"

Cain's work has been compared to *The Silence of the Lambs*, due to the relationship between her main characters. From the constant visits Archie makes to Gretchen when she's imprisoned, to the fact that he is the only one who knows her well enough to catch her when she escapes in the second book, it's easy to see the similarities. Parallels have also been drawn to Jeff Lindsay's *Dexter* series, primarily due to the recent announcement that FX is developing a TV show based on Cain's novels. However, the author warns that that's where the connection ends.

"Dexter tries, in his own way, to be good," she says. "Gretchen enjoys being bad. Also, Gretchen is not the protagonist of the series, Archie is. But I hope that our show shares *Dexter*'s dark wit and willingness to be dangerous."

Even if it doesn't, there's always the books. And Cain hopes to write Archie/Gretchen stories for years to come.

"I don't want to say goodbye to these characters," she admits. "Weirdly, while my head is always spinning with storylines, I have not imagined a specific end to the series. There are a few obvious scenarios. But I don't want to think about that. It makes me sad. So let's just say that Archie and Gretchen buy some land in Colorado, build their dream house and live happily ever after."


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THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: DEMON SEED OF THE UK

Godmachine, the dark art deity from the UK with the mysterious moniker, has been turning heads lately with his ability to transform skateboards, album covers and apparel into brooding, unholy works to behold. Whether it's a grungy portrait of Leatherface for T-shirt company Fright Rags or his radiant, neon poster print of Troma's *Class of Nuke 'Em High* for poster boutique Skuzzles, the artist – whose handle stems from the true story of an American preacher that attempted to build a mechanical messiah in an effort to communicate with the spirit world – traces his interest in the sunless side of life to his father.

"He is one of those mean, old, hard bastards who has seen some bad stuff in his life, so horror films were always 'just cameras and red sauce,' as he used to say," the artist explains. "I remember watching banned films when we were kids and them making me shit my pants. In those days, *Evil Dead* was even banned for eight years. I was young but my dad didn't mind me watching stuff like that at all."

Citing influences as diverse as classical artist Hieronymus Bosch, skate graphics king Jim Phillips, comic artist Simon Bisley and American illustrator AngryBlue, Godmachine's unique colour combinations have become his signature: brimstone blacks, faded oranges, and turquoise with shocking doses of magenta and toxic greens. His illustrations, crafted with Adobe Photoshop and his trusty Wacom tablet, at times unveil a universe populated with Lovecraftian beings, grim reapers, satanic damsels, demonic angels and rotting skulls – lots of skulls. But it's his careful line work and bold lighting where Godmachine's artwork truly comes alive. Luckily, the tentacled creatures and gnarled skeletons that inhabit his canvas do not, for it would most definitely signify the end of days.

Working from his home, which he's dubbed The Haus of Godmachine, the illustrator admits that he's constantly reminded how lucky he is to create art for a living.

"I thought only people in films and a magic land actually made a living from doing something they loved!" he exclaims, before extolling some advice for artists looking to make their mark. "Draw what the fuck you want but do it for the love of drawing, not to make money. Listen only to those you ask advice of. Far too often, those willing to shoot their mouths off are just angry or bitter about something. The quiet ones are the ones getting on with making art, the others are talking about it. Email some artist you respect and admire and listen to them. Listen to what they say. Listen, goddammit."



Recently, Godmachine was among a handful of artists invited to participate in a sci-fi-themed show for poster mavens Mondo, to celebrate the grand opening of the company's new digs in Austin, Texas. His contribution "Monsters," an H.R. Giger-inspired piece featuring a xenomorph and created with ink and watercolour, sold faster than a face-hugger can get a grip on your mug. He teases that an upcoming poster project, another *Alien*-inspired piece, this time for Australian poster company Tommygood, has really captured his psyche.

"It's Ripley that makes the monster," he says. "Without her, the alien is emotionless and just a machine, but through Ripley we are given its true horror. Throughout the franchise, she has always been there, she is the alien. She is its catfish, its mirror, its purpose and voice. I used this idea for the new poster."

Unfortunately, the artist wasn't able to reveal his latest monstrosity to us at press time, so you'll just have to wait until it comes out of hypersleep to see it. In the meantime, feast your eyes on other works by the mighty Godmachine at deadmetalclothing.bigcartel.com. I've got my third eye on that rad *Spider Baby* one (pictured above). Visit often, if you dare.




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THE GORE-MET MENU

FEARLESS FUSION CUISINE



Dear God No!

One of my favourite films from last year was Jason Eisener's '80s homage *Hobo with a Shotgun*, and as a result I've softened my stance on retro-grindhouse films to the point that I'll actually recommend a couple!

One that's been generating a lot of buzz online lately is writer/director James Bickert's *Dear God No!* (2011), which opens with an outrageously offensive scene that sets the tone for the whole film. After waking up in the lot of a drive-in amongst a bunch of dead or dying nuns, a gang of outlaw bikers known as The Impalers – who style themselves as the one percent of the one percent – enjoy a quick breakfast of drugs and beer before finishing off the sisters. One of the bikers even does a burnout on a nun who tries to run away, spraying blood and intestines everywhere.

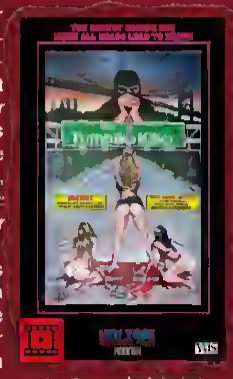
Then it's off to a meeting with the head of the local crime syndicate in the back of a seedy roadhouse, where members of a rival gang are being entertained by topless dancers in Richard Nixon masks. The Impalers are told to stop their raping and killing spree, which prompts a ridiculously bloody shootout that includes strippers with Tommy guns! After fleeing for their lives, the surviving members of the gang stop at a gas station and get into a fatal confrontation with a couple of cops.



Afterward, they track a young couple that they previously harassed to a remote cabin in the Georgia woods, where an anthropologist and his introverted daughter are conducting mysterious research. Mayhem expectedly ensues when the bikers invade the cabin and Bigfoot shows up!

Dear God No! is not only an homage to '70s exploitation films, it's an instant education in just about every conceivable exploitation subgenre. Bickert works genre staples such as bikers, hicks, nuns, Nazis, sex, drugs, mad scientists and conspiracy theorists into his script, and then sprinkles it with elements from rape/revenge, nature-run-amok, psychedelic and cryptozoology films. Shot with vintage 16mm cameras and teeming with practical makeup and special effects, it's a campy labour of love.

Another new film based on time-tested recipes that recently slid across the old butcher's block is a disturbing and unabashedly no-budget tribute to the grimy slasher and serial killer oeuvre called *The Turnpike Killer*. Shot in 2009, filmmakers Brian Weaver and Evan Makrogiannis decided to film additional bits for their debut effort, after having difficulty finding a distributor for their latest collaboration, *The Super* (2010). *The Turnpike Killer* is a take on films such as *The Toolbox Murders* (1978), *Maniac* (1980) and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1986).



Here, Bill McLaughlin puts in a star turn as Jon Beast, a hulking, remorseless brute driven by voices in his head to slaughter whores and cleanse the world of filth while seeking "the chosen one." Once again, the opening scene sells the film: a woman awakens in a bloodstained basement and starts screaming at the sight of naked, mutilated bodies. Jon quickly puts her down by clubbing her in the head with a hammer, driving nails into her face, and calmly gutting her.

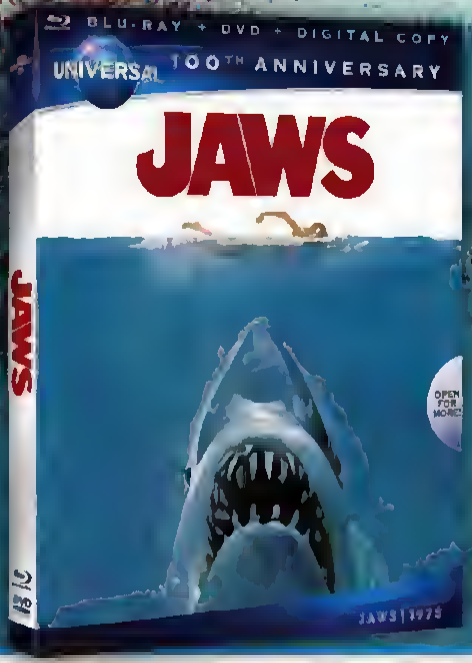
On the surface, he's something of an enigma in his social circle but gets by on quirky charm, even as he cruises the back alleys and perks of New York City for victims. When he helps move some tenants into the house of his buddy Donny (Vinny Ward), he meets Jennifer (Lyndsey Brown) and decides she's the chosen one. Meanwhile, a determined homicide detective is eager to catch the killer dumping bodies along the New Jersey Turnpike.

This is an unrelentingly grim gore flick made by a couple of horror fans whose only real ambition was to make the sort of slasher they wanted to see. Whatever it may lack in originality, it more than compensates for in a final act twist that puts the entire plot into perspective.

The limited deluxe edition from New York Horror Productions comes in a replica big-box VHS case with both a tape and an anamorphic DVD version, which includes a feature-length documentary sure to appeal to any horror fan, as well as a bonus 25-minute short, *Devil Moon* (2012), written by Makrogiannis' thirteen-year-old son Liem.

Two unexpectedly tasty new dishes thrown together with traditional ingredients. Dig in!

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AUDIO DROME

DOA = DEAD ON ARRIVAL

REVIEWS BY THE GORE MET MARK R. HASAN MONICA S. KUEBLER AARON VON LUPTON SHAWN MACOMBER GEORGE PACHECO SEAN PLUMMER AND TREVOR TUMINSKI



PREDATOR

SOUNDTRACK

Alan Silvestri

INTRADA

Alan Silvestri's penultimate sci-fi score finally gets a non-limited release – flawlessly remastered and re-sequenced with a smidge more music than the prior edition, which sold out in a day. Big and robust, Silvestri's human-hunting opus develops from a simple militaristic rhythm with echoing snare drum and evolves into minimalist versions, with major action scenes backed by a full orchestra. The decision to save the orchestral might for the juiciest parts of the classic extraterrestrial rumble in the jungle makes Silvestri's *Predator* a marvellous and engrossing work. It's also one that features many of his little signatures: repeated phrases ping-ponging between instruments, swelling brass and wonderful rhythmic patterns for moments of desperation, flight and face-to-face combat. Equally memorable is the perfect integration of synth samples, which barely date the score, enhancing the orchestra's power instead of replacing whole sections. Now all we need is an expanded *Predator 2*, and the world will be a better place. **MRH** ★★★★★



PIRANHA 3DD

SOUNDTRACK

Elia Cmiral

LAKESHORE

While most can agree that Joe Dante's *Piranha* (1978) is a drive-in classic, Alexandre Aja's 2010 3-D remake was heralded as either a bloodsoaked exploitation celebration or derided for missing the point and lacking well... piranhas. Nevertheless, its box-office success virtually guaranteed a sequel, and though *Piranha 3DD* has been almost universally panned, at least one aspect of it bests its predecessor: the inspired score of Elia Cmiral. Rife with nods to iconic Italian composers such as Stelvio Cipriani and Ennio Morricone, Cmiral's knack for memorable melody runs deep in these treshly infested waters. Whether it's a cue rippling with '70s-style analog synth, or his penchant for orchestral darkness, percussive menace and strong, conceptual composition, the Czech maestro brings back the bite of Pino Donaggio's work on Dante's original fish frenzy. *Piranha 3DD* may be a lighthearted, tongue-in-cheek film but Cmiral's score is dead serious when it comes to serving up legitimate chills and thrills. **GP** ★★★★½



THE PACT

SOUNDTRACK

Ronen Landa

SCREAMWORKS

Sometimes music that perfectly fits the onscreen action it was composed to amplify – here, the story of a grieving woman who encounters a sinister presence in her childhood home – doesn't translate into a similarly coherent listening experience when separated from the film. This is the case here. The opening trio of tracks, full of intriguing melodies – moody piano and sorrowful violin, lulls the listener into melancholic introspection before it's smashed by a series of much more cliché horror stings, full of beating drums and violent strings. The best moments are the quiet ones infused with frantic tapping, eerie reverberating echoes and other creepy, ambient sounds made music. Centring the majority of the cues around a solitary piano and, occasionally, the sad strains of a violin instead of a robust orchestra is a bold choice that makes for some unbelievably haunting, lonely-feeling compositions. Still, without any real flow between the mostly short tracks, and several extended periods of silence and barely audible drones, it's hard to recommend this to anyone but hardcore soundtrack enthusiasts. **MSK** ★★½



VAMPIRES EVERYWHERE!

ROCK

Hellbound and Heartless

HOLLYWOOD WASTE

Vampires Everywhere! seems to have traded disorders on its new album *Hellbound and Heartless*. Whereas last year's debut *Kiss the Sun Goodbye* suffered from schizophrenia, with the Hollywood horror rock outfit haphazardly grafting Autotuned dance and pop elements onto rock guitars and post-hardcore beats, this year's model has shown a penchant for necrophilia, raping the corpse of *Antichrist Superstar*-era Marilyn Manson ("Kiss of Death" is a bloodless 'Beautiful People' rip-off.) To give frontman Michael Vampire (ooh, that name again!) some credit, he's committed more definitely to a singular sound, somewhere between the industrial Sunset Strip sleaze of The Newlydeads ("Drug of Choice") and Avenged Sevenfold metalcore ("Star of 666"). (Note: Vampire's lyrics have also been stripped of their *Twilight*-esque romanticism, in favour of talk of teenage Antichrists and bloody hands.) The tuneless cover of Nirvana's "Rape Me," meanwhile, is exactly the sort of cynical crossover move you think it is. Sorry, but Vampires Everywhere! has still not earned that exclamation mark. **SP** ★★



NACHTMYSTIUM

METAL

Silencing Machine

CENTURY MEDIA

Some evolutions are so elemental that the ripples can never truly be contained. Just ask Edward Jessup, if you can catch him between mescaline-fuelled jaunts into his *Altered States* sensory deprivation tank, or Nachtmystium mastermind Blake Judd, who recently threatened to clip his band's increasingly psychedelic wings en route to a grimmer, more traditional black metal sound, only to deliver *Silencing Machine*, a sublime slab of brutality that is less primal throwback than a darker transmutation of an ever-evolving hydra-headed heavy metal

HYMNS FROM THE HOUSE OF HORROR VOLUME III



SKINNY PUPPY

INDUSTRIAL

Live: Bootlegged, Broke and In Solvent Seas

METROPOLIS

Since the early '80s, Skinny Puppy has staged visceral live shows seething with challenging video projections, bloodsoaked butcher smocks, garish masks and other disturbing horror theatrics. Stripped of the arresting visuals, though, how do the Canuck industrial innovators fare? Well, *Live* proves to be both a step back *and* a step forward. Working from a set culled almost entirely from the band's salad days (1985's *Bites* to 1990's *Too Dark Park*, but sadly ignorant of 1992's *Last Rites*), Nivek Ogre's scathing rasp and cEvin Key's laboratory of bristly synths sound remarkably good considering this was recorded straight-up, sans overdubs. Some clunky sequencing and awkward fadeouts disrupt the atmosphere, but after the lack of vitriol on 2011's *Handover*, well-oiled takes of ear lesions such as "Deadlines," "Assimilate," "Worlock" and "Morpheus Laughing" are a welcome return to form. There's obviously still some piss left in the tank, 'cause the band actually sounds fucking scary again. **TT** ★★★½

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SKINNY PUPPY – "DOGSHIT"

the DEVIL'S PLAYLIST

Necro's music is *not* horrorcore. If only I'd remembered that from his interview segment in *RM#58*, when we looked at the history of the horror and hip hop hybrid. Instead, I incurred the wrath of "the most extreme hip hop artist on Earth" before we even got around to talking about the cold-blooded "bangers" on his ninth studio release, *The Murder Murder Kill Kill EP* (now out on his own Psycho+Logical Records).

"I invented the genre 'death rap,' which I am the only artist on Earth to do correctly," he explains. "It's when I rap technically complex, violent lyrics over sampled East Coast hip hop beats. The term 'horrorcore' was invented by a bisexual man named Russell Simmons, founder of Def Jam. It's a term that is not respected by the entire hip hop community. It is frowned upon because 95 percent of the artists are corny, suck and have no lyrical talent, the beats are made to sound like bad horror movies with Casio keyboard beats and the lyrics are cheeseball – 'I am gonna kill ya mother with a shovel'-type shit … I hope that clears it up."

I'm not sure how the sexual orientation of a record label mogul is relevant but I suppose the rest makes things a little less murky, sure. Horrorcore frequently focuses on the most gruesome elements of horror (e.g. slaying and dismemberment) rather than monsters and haunted houses, but that doesn't stop Necro from likening it to a scary, occasionally amusing ride composed purely for shock value.



"My shit is something you will take very seriously," says the New York City-based rapper, "because you know Necro has done a lot of what he says and that what I rap about happens every day, every second in life."

And it's all the more horrific when it's simultaneously happening to you and you in the third person, I imagine.

By far the most controversial track on *Murder Murder* is "Sharon's Fetus (The Pre-Kill)," which eerily re-appropriates the haunting theme from Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* and mixes it with lyrics from Misfits' "Last Caress" ("I've got something to say / I killed your baby today," etc.) and Necro's rapid-fire ruminations on the hypothetical moments leading up to the 1969 slaying of Polanski's pregnant wife, Sharon Tate, by the Manson family. Unsurprisingly, my suggestion that the song seems a little tasteless even for such a wicked word-slinger as Necro is met with opposition.

"The fact is, all horror movies butcher people for two hours at a time, and that is okay and a huge moneymaker in Hollywood," he argues. "My song is just doing the same thing – no difference – but because it's hip hop, everyone is quick to judge."

Ah, but it's not the graphic violence or the genre of the song that's at issue. Unlike the shopping list of macabre scenarios of another album cut, "Gore!," "Sharon's Fetus" isn't a fictional tale, but a cruel, glamourizing ode to the murder of an innocent woman, with child no less.

Maybe I'm wasting my time talking semantics with a guy who's spent the past twenty-plus years defending his music from a hip hop community that he calls "racist" and hypocritical. Just to be clear, though: I don't dislike the song because you're white, Necro, only because your heart is black.

So mote it be.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

beast. True, this doesn't possess the same resolute malevolent flamboyance of *Black Meddle Pt. 1: Assassins* (2008) or (especially) *Black Meddle Pt. 2: Addicts* (2010). Scratch the surface, however, and adventurous strands dance within this tightly woven disharmonic tapestry. *Silencing Machine* is a majestic creation seething with a transgressive subtlety and hellish cacophony that confirms Judd's status as one of the most irrepressibly inventive purveyors of epic grinding riffs and rapturous choruses in extreme metal today. SM ★★★★½



DENIAL OF GOD

METAL

Death and the Beyond

HELLS HEADBANGERS

It's been roughly twenty years since the Danish underground scene spat out Denial of God, yet this marks only its second full-length release. The trio calls itself "black horror metal" but plays so slowly so often that the results would be better classified as a concoction of doom and traditional heavy metal. Taking cues from countrymen Mercyful Fate/King Diamond, the lyrics deal with horror narratives as opposed to the usual upside-down cross-pumping, which is cool, but the songs are so repetitive, long and boring that no one'll give a burned church what vocalist Ustumallagam is moaning about. When the Danes break into the swirling speed that matches their corpse paint, they get a nice dirty atmosphere going à la older Darkthrone and newer Alcest, though never with as much violence and spite. The analog recording approach doesn't help matters either, serving to only make the album sound even flatter. Some cool melodies here, but overall this is just creepy background noise. AVL ★½



ZOMBIEFICATION

METAL

Reaper's Consecration

PULVERIZED

It seems as if every new issue of *RM* signals the arrival of yet another "New School of Swedish Death Metal" imitator – a (not so) fresh-faced group seeking to replicate and reimagine the heyday of Stockholm's Sunlight Studios and that infamous, chainsaw guitar sound. The latest, Zombiefication, displays its Entombed, Grave and Dismember influences proudly – with just a dash of America's Autopsy for good measure – on *Reaper's Consecration*, a follow-up five-song EP to its 2010 debut *Midnight Stench*. Morbid, gut-wrenching riffing is the name of the game on "Necrohell," a track anchored by properly mid-paced drumming, while the vocals of "Mr. Hitchcock" are hollow, guttural and suitably brutal. This Mexican act may not win any awards for original songwriting – "Death Rides" and "Dead Today, Dust Tomorrow" embrace the Swedish death template firmly and without mercy – but Zombiefication's infectious energy and undeniable skill make each slay-tanic lick, skittering lead and bloodcurdling howl count where it matters, in true metal style. GP ★★★½



SATANIC BLOODSPRAYING

METAL

At the Mercy of Satan

HELLS HEADBANGERS

This Bolivian band is playing the black metal enigma schtick to the hilt. There isn't a group photo nor any mention of a lineup included in its promotional material. By design, the music is left to speak for itself, which raises more questions than it answers. Is that a drum machine? Are they serious? Who's that awesome vocalist? What *is* known is that this is 25 minutes of blasphaming fun! Opener "Draining Blood" is a brief blastfest built on a raging, repetitive riff slathered with anguished vocals, which leads straight into the equally overwrought "Satanic Skullfuck," a suspiciously goofy title. The music is deadly serious, though. The riffs are vicious, the guitar tones evil, the vocals tortured, and the drama and dynamics of tracks such as "Necro Dominatrix," "March of the Dead" and "The Day the Earth Stood Still" reveal real craft. Who doesn't want credit for their work, even if it's under a silly pseudonym? GM ★★★★½



YEAR OF THE ORCS

BY TREVOR TUMINSKI

SET TO UNLEASH A GIANT-KILLING CONCEPT ALBUM LATER THIS MONTH, A BAND OF ORCS GRUNTS ABOUT ITS LATEST ARSENAL OF BATTLE HYMNS

The last time we spoke, in 2010, Oog Skullbasher [drums] and Hulg ElfRipper [guitar] really wanted to eat my brain. What have you orcs been up to since then?

Cretos Filthgrinder [lead guitar]: Foolish human, only Hulg eat brains. Oog just want to smash you. We been in Trident Studios [in Pacheco, California] making most brutally epic album of 2012, *Adding Heads to the Pile* [out August 30 via Relapse Metal Entertainment].

The Warchiefs of the Apocalypse EP was released five years ago. Why has it taken so long for a full album? Do orcs measure the passage of time differently than humans?

Gogog Bloodthroat [vocals]: Yes. Measure with axe.

Gronk! [bass]: Human not have to manage tribe in two realms. Us back and forth, back and forth from Himtodia.

Tell us about Adding Heads' theme of "giant troubles" that the band has been entrusted to settle.

Gogog: Raiding. Killing. Enslaving. Bullying. Taking gold. The usual.

Gronk!: Not entrusted. Ensorcelled and paid gold. Humans of Himtodia smart. Never trust orc.

Cretos: Still not work out for them, though. Us add them heads to pile.

Hulg: Brainnnnnzzzz ... eat many brainzzzz.

Uh, Hulg isn't looking so good. Is he a zombie?

Gogog: Zombie fall apart. Hard to hold together with duct tape and bubble gum. Ahahaha!

Cretos: Me got tired of looking at his old head so we get new one.

Gronk!: Him rot too much. Maggots eat flesh. Too fast playing make arm fall off again. Real messy. Pieces of flesh and soil all over ground. Us put back together with fresh face. — Hulg look pretty now, but still dead and still play brutal.

Hulg: Braaaainnnnnnnzzzzzzzz....

What were your musical goals for the new album?



Gogog: To finish! Us spend much time killing giants and adding heads to pile, then us have to share time in Trident with Testament. Gogog not like share but make exception for metal legends.

Why do you think bands of monsters such as GWAR, Slipknot, Mudvayne, Lordi, Mushroomhead and yourselves continue to be popular?

Cretos: 'Cause humans wish they can be brutal as us.

Gronk!: Ha ha, news to us. Us not popular. You help?

Gogog: You fooled. Those bands all humans in costume. Us orcs, that why not popular. Humans scared of orc, but Justin Bieber popular.

What's the connection between heavy music and horror theatrics?

Gogog: Us not the-a-trical. Us dress in armour and weapons from home realm. Us "keep it real," as humans say.

As of this interview, it doesn't look like the Kickstarter campaign you initiated to press the new album in a deluxe vinyl edition is going to raise the necessary funds.

Gogog: Humans not get epic record with epic art, but album still come out in other realm.

Gronk!: No, astral.

Cretos: Them mean internets. We always find way — might just pillage town to make up for it.

What was the attraction of issuing the album on vinyl anyway? I thought you were orcs, not Luddites.

Oog: Oog smash now?

Gronk!: No, not now. Us need human help to make us famous. Human, us like look at [Iron Maiden's] Eddie on picture disc. Us like look at Slayer zombies on *Live Undead* picture disc. It makes us' black souls move.

I've read that human babies are part of the orc diet. What does A Band of Orcs have on its backstage rider?

Cretos: Me request elf — over easy — with a side of dwarf heads — beard-free — and a nice glass of unicorn blood with lots of pulp.

Gronk!: Me not understand you human food. It all made of paper and plastic. How you stay fit to fight battle?

Gogog: Gogog not care. Gogog eat whatever tusks can rend.

Oog: Oog smash now!

All: Hail Gzoroth!



PLAY DEAD

NOW PLAYING > LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW, THE BINDING OF ISAAC: WRATH OF THE LAMB



LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Xbox 360, PS3

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment



Saccharine, sassy, sexy, gory, at times extremely silly and almost always boasting a palette of sparkling rainbow colours, *Lollipop Chainsaw* is a conundrum. It's a game that calls to mind the ass-kicking of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, complete with the teenage saviour angle and tortured love story, but at the same time has a crass, suggestive edge with heroine Juliet Starling's skimpy costume, leering camerawork and raunchy humour. Whom this is aimed at may well be one of life's great mysteries.

It's Juliet's eighteenth birthday (presumably so you don't feel as much like a pervert for ogling her) and she's got big plans, at least until they're ruined by a zombie outbreak. Now, she's been forced to cut the head off of her infected boyfriend to save his life (turning him into a hint-spouting, weaponized belt accessory), and is stuck with a town to save.

Lollipop Chainsaw is a slavishly linear, arcade-style game that uses button-tap combo attacks for dispatching zombies, regular bouts of timed events (requiring a specific key sequence to be pressed) and inline mini-games (one level involves a series of low-res '80s throwback action-puzzlers) that will stop your progress dead until you complete them. The boss fights all revolve around music-inspired zombies (riffing off of death metal makeup, funk music, etc.) and, on the whole, they are easier than some of the mini-games, which leaves *Lollipop Chainsaw* feeling somewhat unbalanced.

Then there are the glitches; the witty zombie identifier cards that pop up on the screen don't stay there long enough to actually be read, occasionally, when switching to gun-mode the camera spins you in the opposite direction and it doesn't always keep up during frenetic battles, leaving dangerous enemies off screen.

If you like a hearty dose of cute and weird with your zombie slaying, and lots of shout-outs to horror fandom, there's much to dig in *Lollipop Chainsaw*, which can be played through in under twenty hours. You can buy in-game character upgrades (to gain attributes and additional attacks) and other extras with the coins you earn from kills and successful combos, while replaying any completed stage can boost your performance/score/coins. However, the frustrating nature of some of the mandatory mini-games may dissuade you. Fun, though flawed, it's still worth enrolling for a playthrough, if just to absorb the visual spectacle and *Slither* director James Gunn's occasionally laugh-out-loud script. Class dismissed (and gratuitously dispatched)!

MONICA S. KUEBLER

HEADSHOTS: FUN, COMIC BOOK-STYLED GRAPHICS, WITTY ONE-LINERS, ENGAGING STORY
MISFIRES: CHAINSAW-GUN AIMING GLITCHES, SOME MINI-GAMES OVERLY DIFFICULT



THE BINDING OF ISAAC: WRATH OF THE LAMB

PC/Mac

Edmund McMillen

Combining biblical horror with cute cartoons seems strange, yet that's exactly what Edmund McMillen and Florian Himsl have done in *The Binding of Isaac* and its new expansion, *Wrath of the Lamb*. Child abuse, gruesome creatures and divine beings are slapped together in this dungeon crawler, which has players descending into a random maze of rooms to find items, fight monsters and defeat grotesque bosses.

The value-priced *Wrath* expansion (only $3!) offers new endings, as well as additional items, creatures and big bads. Otherwise, gameplay remains the same – you control Isaac, your mom is still a crazy Christian lady hell-bent on killing you, and your end goal hasn't changed – off her first.

As with the original build, the opening dungeon eases you into Isaac's world, before you are presented with a challenging series of randomly generated rooms full of monsters that make life hell. And watch out, because if you die, you'll have to start from the beginning of the game and play through another randomly generated dungeon set. While pausing is allowed, saving is not.

For *Wrath*, room art and some of the character graphics have been redone to be more visually appealing. Since a typical run through the game can take 30 to 90 minutes, the added detail is a welcome change and improves the overall atmosphere, especially in the later dungeons. The new monsters (including a variety of deadly spiders), weapons (Epic Fetus rocket launcher, anyone?) and additional endings will be welcome features for anyone who has mastered the game, as they increase the difficulty significantly.

Unfortunately, the immersive fun is spoiled at times by performance issues, namely lag. Plus, certain item combinations can either break the game or make it boringly easy. These setbacks are annoying, but certainly not any reason to avoid checking this out.

Wrath provides additional blasphemously cute and gory amusement at a great, anyone-can-afford-it price. What could be better than that?

DAVID KRAUSE

HEADSHOTS: ADDED CONTENT, REPLAY VALUE, BARGAIN-PRICED
MISFIRES: PERFORMANCE ISSUES AND UNBALANCED ITEMS



AprilMayn and Statikchild photographed by Red Lite

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CLASSIC CUT

THE LITERATURE OF TERROR

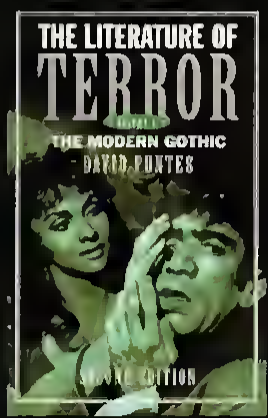
DAVID PUNTER ☠ 1980

All serious writing on horror literature can be divided into two parts: that published before 1980 and that written afterward. An undeniable cornerstone in this regard is a lengthy study by British professor David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (1980), and its influence on subsequent study of horror fiction cannot be overstressed.



Previous books devoted to this subject were scarce, unsystematic, often whimsical and tinged with well-meaning amateurism (e.g., Montague Summers' *The Gothic Quest*). Punter's book, firmly grounded in literary theory and history, came at the very end of the decade in which horror films migrated from denigrated B-movie status to blockbusters (thanks to 1973's *The Exorcist*), while horror fiction routinely found its way onto best-seller lists (largely due to the work of pioneering authors such as William Peter Blatty, Stephen King and others).

The sudden and phenomenal success of this type of prose – which no one had taken seriously for far too long – brought about the need to define its origins, varieties and significance. No longer a footnote in the studies of Romanticism, horror (under the guise of the more respectable term "Gothic") hit centre stage because of Punter's study.



This exhaustive account of the genre widened its scope by perceiving the Gothic way beyond its traditional historical confines (1764–1820) and by demonstrating its transmutations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. This is *The Literature of Terror*'s crucial distinction: it revealed a tradition much larger and richer than assumed up to that point. Prior to this study, horror was mostly unrecognized as a wide and complex genre; instead, the few existing attempts to view it academically dealt with its various subgenres separately (e.g., "female Gothic," "ghost story," "weird tale," etc.). It was Punter who showed that there is one constantly metamorphosing entity reaching from Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1765) until present day. The expanded edition (1996) was split into two volumes (pictured), and added a chapter devoted to the Gothic elements in the fiction of writers such as William S. Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon and J. G. Ballard, plus a chapter on horror films and a new, lengthy afterword that somewhat revised and summed up the book's critical perspectives.

Other contributions of Punter's study include the following:

1) It firmly rooted the horror genre within the history and culture(s) that shaped it, showing its interrelation with contemporary concerns and fears in England and America between the Age of Reason and postmodernism.

2) It defined the genre's role in development of the "novel of plot" and its defiance of realist aesthetics.

3) It introduced the concept of "paranoiac fiction," in which "the 'implicated' reader is placed in a situation of ambiguity with regard to the fears within the text, and in which the attribution of persecution remains uncertain and the reader is invited to share in the doubts and uncertainties which pervade the apparent story."

4) It stressed the importance of the "barbaric" and "taboo" in shaping the fears and responses to them in horror fiction through its history. As Punter said, "It is in its concerns with paranoia, with barbarism and with taboo that the vital effort of Gothic fiction resides; these are the aspects of the terrifying to which Gothic constantly, and hauntedly, returns."

Punter's approach is sometimes burdened with psychoanalytic theories of suppression, sublimation and paranoia on the cultural level, and some critics have rightly challenged his overt psychologizing of the genre at the cost of other aspects. However, with all its limitations, this particular approach – together with added shades of Marxism, feminism and gender theory – has become dominant in the decades to follow. His psychologized Gothic shaped mainstream academic studies of horror fiction and mapped the terrain for further, even more aggressively ideological readings.

The Literature of Terror has become an indispensable textbook in the rising "Gothic studies" courses, which became common at universities throughout the Western world, largely thanks to this work. It brought serious critical attention to a then-academically marginalized genre, demonstrated the range of its possibilities to reshape and reinvent itself and traced the various ways in which the Gothic legacy has coloured the literature of the last two centuries. It is unthinkable to look at the index of any serious publication about horror fiction written after 1980 without finding references to Punter. Even if some aspects of *The Literature of Terror* are partially superseded by newer studies of the field, those later ones were made possible by Punter's pioneering work.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

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